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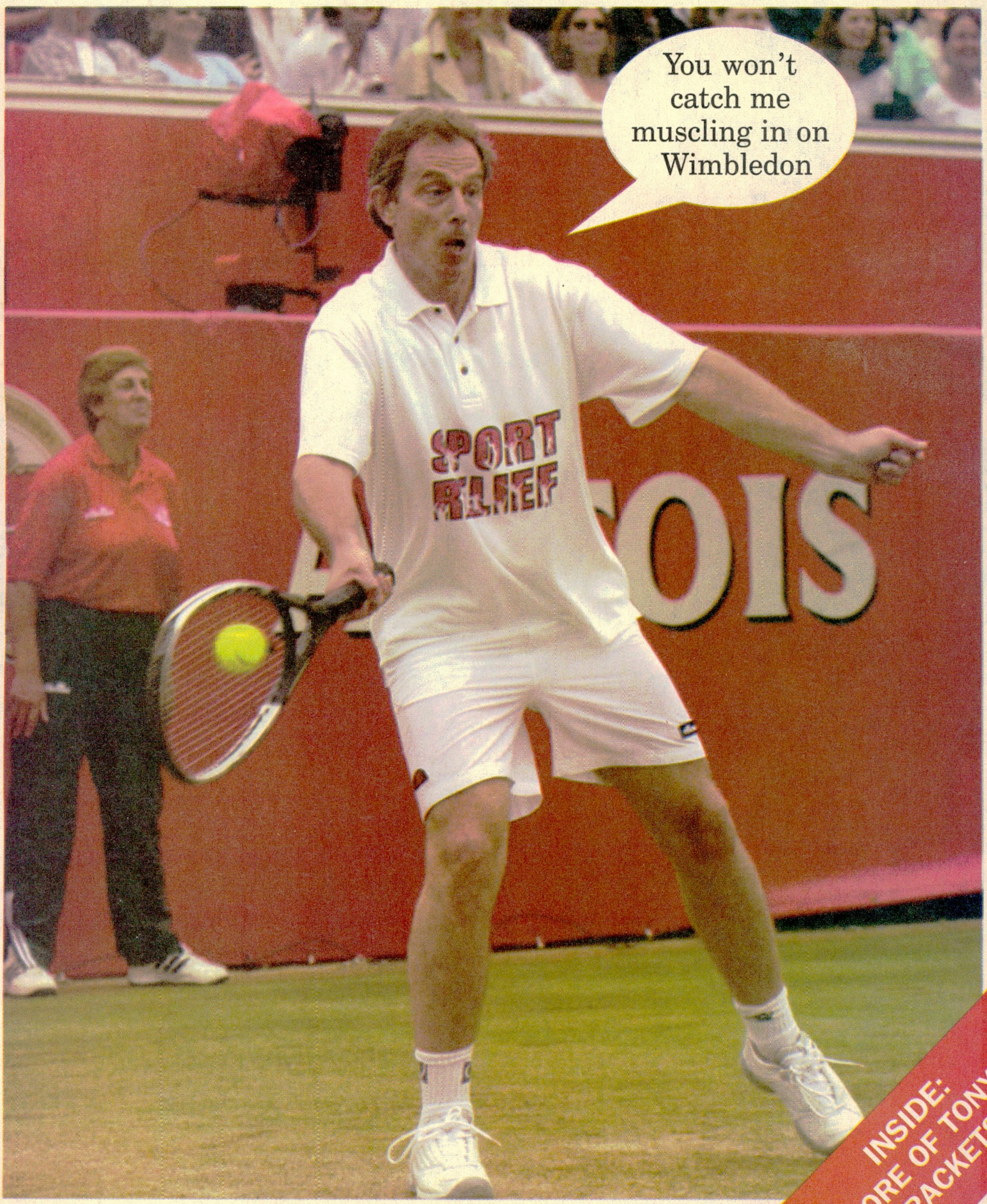
PRIVATE EYE



INSIDE: MORE OF TONY'S RACKETS

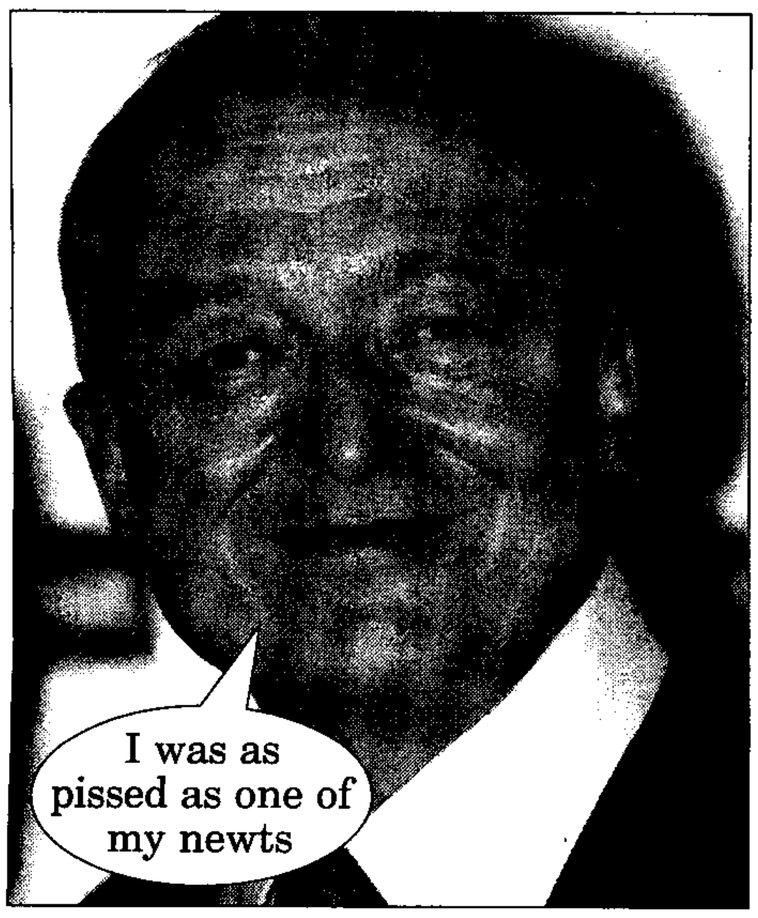
Gnome

YOU may have noticed that this year Gnomafone Plc has once again made the headlines with its world-beating losses of £500 billion. At the same time, I myself have been awarded the modest sum of £6 billion as a bonus for my part in the achievement of taking the mobile phone industry into the next generation.

You may well ask why I have been given all this money. My answer is "Sorry... what was that? You're breaking up... Sorry.. I can't hear you... Bzzzzt... Hello? Hello? I'll call you back."

Lord Gnome
The Gents
A Train Somewhere
Near Newbury, Berks

RED-FACED KEN



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

● Nastase, after playing against Tony Blair, "I let him win because I wanted to leave the country."

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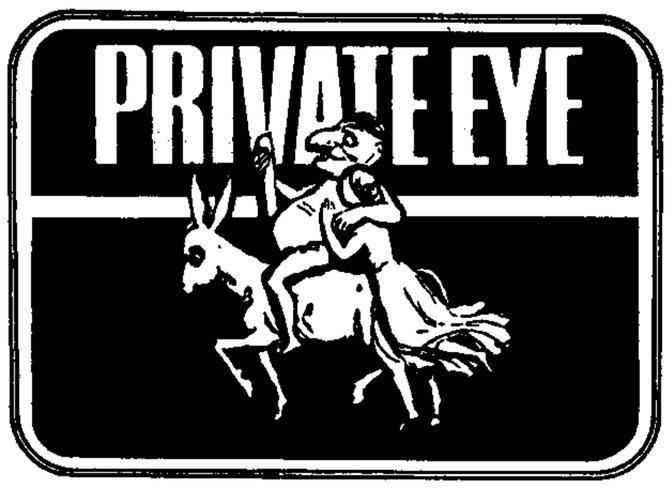

Born to serve!

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WHEN President George Bush imposed steel tariffs against Britain and Europe, slippery trade secretary Patricia Hewitt was quick to dismiss fears that this might damage the coalition against terrorism.

"It is important to understand that there is no connection between the action on steel and the global coalition against terrorism," she told MPs on 6 March, the day after Bush's announcement. "We stand with the Americans and many other countries around the world in the coalition because it is the right thing to do."

At a lobby briefing that afternoon, Tony Blair's spokesman said it would be "simplistic" and "wrong" to make linkages between these two wholly separate issues. And two weeks later Hewitt again told MPs that "we would be wrong to link the war against terrorism with the trade war on steel that the Americans have unfortunately launched".

Oh really? Perhaps Hewitt had forgotten that on 1 March she sent the US commerce secretary Don Evans a last-minute plea not to impose steel tariffs. The private letter, now obtained under the American freedom of information act, argued that "unilateral restrictions would be particularly inappropriate at this time of growing international cooperation – notably the global coalition against terror".

There was a time when misleading the House was treated as quite a serious matter. Now it's so commonplace, however, we trust that no MP will be churlish enough to demand that Hewitt apologise for telling shameless fibs.

ALISTAIR Darling made a fresh start as transport secretary by appointing David Quarmby as the new one-day-a-week deputy chairman of the strategic rail authority (SRA).

The SRA is supposed to make Britain's trains run on time, and British Tourist Authority boss Quarmby brings a wealth of experience to the job.

For four years he was a director of the New Millennium Experience Company, helping to run… the dome. Thanks to Darling, men like Quarmby will ensure there is no chance millions of pounds of government money will be wasted on the rails.

A REPORT by analysts Ovum Holway reveals that the UK's public sector spent £3.4bn on IT services last year. This year the figure is expected to rise to £3.8bn.

The analysts say that £100m of this has been wasted in the past 10 months alone on projects which have run hopelessly over budget. And who does Ovum Holway blame for the government's IT mismanagement?

Step forward the Eye's old friend EDS, the computer company whose 10-year contract with the Inland Revenue has gone repeatedly over budget and whose computerised pay system for the ministry of defence is running spectacularly late.

Pete Foster, principal analyst at Ovum Holway, said one of the biggest problems for government IT spending is that "EDS has half of all the IT services revenue which makes it very difficult for others to break in and get the sort of competition that ensures value for money".

TO celebrate its ludicrous rebranding as "Monday", PriceWaterhouseCoopers Consulting has set up a pseudish website, www.introducingmonday.com, to explain how utterly brillant the firm is. "Monday is a fresh start, a positive attitude, part of everyone's life," it babbles. "Monday is confident. It stands out and it stands for something."

Alas! Despite months of preparation and a multi-million budget, the poor saps forgot to register www.introducingmonday.co.uk at the same time. The domain name has now been snapped up by a group of Internet mischief-makers, and visitors are entertained with a rousing chorus of "we've got your name, la la la!"

EVEN before a knighthood was conferred on ageing rocker Mick Jagger, the elderly hipster was gathering support from the most unlikely sources - including perennial busy body, David Winnick MP.

"May I make a constructive suggestion?" he asked Robin Cook during a committee debate in the Commons. "Might it be possible to make Mr Jagger one of the people's peers - if only for his outstanding performances, which are an encouragement to all of us of a certain age?"

Which "performances" did Winnick have in mind?

THE BBC's *Ten O'Clock News* is normally a bastion of worthy new values and informed debate. So viewers who tuned in on 19 June were taken aback to hear someone shouting "Fuck Off" at full volume during a news item.

The programme had gone to Italy to report on the Italian club Perugia's decision to drop the South Korean player whose goal had knocked Italy out of the World Cup. Footage showed an Italian crowd watching the match outdoors on a giant screen. When the golden goal went in for Korea a furious Italian fan yelled "Va fanculo". Did the editors of the item suffer a concentration lapse or is there no one at BBC news who speaks Italian?

WHAT YOU WON'T HEAR ON THE BBC

Reporter (*outside Spike Milligan's memorial service*)**:** If you had to sum up Spike Milligan in one word, what would it be?

Barry Humphries: Bastard.

"I got Deep Vein Thrombosis waiting in the departure lounge at Gatwick"

NEWS

IF, as seems likely, the government takes another plunge into nuclear power, the prospects look good for Clare Spottiswoode, who has just been made deputy chairman of nuclear generator British Energy.

Ms Spottiswoode has had an impressive career in industry as both poacher and gamekeeper. She was once the regulator of the privatised gas industry, a position she achieved thanks to the recommendation of a top department of trade civil servant John Mitchell. *Eye* readers will recall that Mr Mitchell sent her flowers on her appointment, and later accompanied her to the Houston headquarters of an exciting new energy company called Enron.

In 1998 Ms Spottiswoode, no longer a regulator, joined the board of Azurix, formerly Wessex Water, that had been snapped up by Enron. When the Enron bubble burst, she was quick to tell the *Observer* that she had left the board of Azurix because she was not happy with the state of the accounts. That was not the version she gave when she left Azurix in February 1999. "I have enjoyed my time at Azurix immensely," she said in a press release. "The people there have provided me with a tremendous stimulus and I have been most impressed by their determination to embrace and stimulate change in the water business."

No doubt it was this stimulus from private enterprise that inspired her rapid promotion in the publicly-owned nuclear industry.

ANOTHER dotcom has bitten the dust: not a small gang of twentysomething Sloanes this time but the mighty Barclays Bank. Having spent a small fortune on its e-commerce business BarclaysB2B.com, it quietly posted a notice on the website two weeks ago to let the world know it had shut up shop.

It's all so different from the tremendous fanfare two years ago when Barclays announced the launch of this joint venture with, er, Accenture, the former Andersen Consulting. All caught up in the excitement of the internet, Barclays fell for Accenture's spiel about huge potential profits and invested tens of millions in its "e-business gateway". The offices, near hip Hoxton, were fitted out with Scalextric and table football in approved dotcon style.

But customers just wouldn't wake up and smell the coffee, despite several changes of strategy, and the business continued to haemorrhage money until the Barclays bosses finally lost patience. Their official statement is a small masterpiece of corporate-bollocks: "Following an extensive reassessment of the market economics of our business and the needs of the Barclays Group, BarclaysB2B board has decided to refocus the capabilities developed to help accelerate reduction in Barclays' own cost structure." Which is Birtspeak for going arse-over-tit.

But not everyone is a loser in this sorry tale. Accenture, which lost only a minimum stake in the business as against the millions wasted by Barclays, has earned handsome consultancy fees *and* now acquires all the remaining BarclaysB2B customers. As usual, the consultants walk off with the spoils – while the hundred-odd BarclaysB2B staff await their redundancy notices.

CLUE 11 across in the *Eye* crossword last issue proved spookily prescient for England's footballers.

As Cyclops wrote: "Seaman's in: manages to gather one ball, then is a complete waste of time (4-5, 6)" Weird or what? (For the correct answer, see page 29.)

Street of Shame

PITY Richard Simpson of the London *Evening Standard*, the boy who cried wolf. He was the only hack to discover that there would be a £100,000 firework display at the nuptials of Paul McCartney and Heather Mills.

Excitedly he passed on the news to his colleagues, but they were dubious. After all, Simpson has become renowned for stories which are, er, heavily spiced with spin. Still they pushed their suspicions aside and a fleet of photographers and journalists followed the proud Simpson out to the edge of the Castle Leslie estate, 20 miles from where they were all staying.

They waited, and they waited with Simpson growing more and more sheepish. Hours passed and at midnight the journos finally headed home cursing Simpson and their own stupidity for believing another of his far-fetched tales.

Simpson stayed on with only a PA photographer for company… and five minutes after his colleagues had left a glorious £100,000 firework display was let off over the estate as Mills and McCartney left.

Earlier in the day the tabloid members of the pack had decided that a lack of an invite shouldn't prevent them from attending the biggest showbiz story of the year. They made their way to the edge of the Castle Leslie estate and tried to crawl through undergrowth to get in. The *Mail*'s Lucie Morris was one of the first to be discovered by McCartney's security men thanks to her cunning camouflage of a bright pink pashmina.

The *Express*'s Mark Jagasia was hiding in bushes, congratulating himself on passing some security men unnoticed, when the mobile phone of a nearby hidden photographer went off and the pair were both hauled out by the heavies. Another PA photographer is only just recovering from shock from his experience. He had successfully crawled close to the buildings and settled himself behind a bush when suddenly the bush stood up. The disguised security man escorted the quivering photographer to the gates.

NEWS Corporation opened its huge new £40m printing plant at Kells, County Meath, two weeks ago. Such is the importance of the venture that Rupert Murdoch himself graced the scene with a personal appearance – and an astonishing revelation.

The Dirty Digger was greeted by the newly reelected Irish premier Bertie Ahern, who introduced him as "one of the world's foremost leaders in media who has been hailed as one of the most outstanding Australian figures of modern times". Once the formal arslikhan was concluded, Rupert granted RTE news the honour of an interview. He claimed he has no desire to expand his newspaper interests in Ireland, but merely wishes to be better able to compete with "Sir" Tony O'Reilly's Independent Newspapers, which itself opened a £50m operation near Dublin recently.

Quoth the Digger: "All my life I've worked against monopolies."

WILL press complaints commission (PCC) director Guy Black be obliged to complain to the commission about the *Guardian* on his own behalf?

Earlier this month the paper claimed that Black would be "standing down from his job early next year". The aggrieved Black fired off a letter: "If the journalist concerned had taken the trouble to call me beforehand, I could have told him that the story was completely untrue."

THE *New Statesman* has consistently slammed lobbying companies for paying "cash for access" to government figures. So perhaps the *Staggers* might like to investigate a grand lunch being held next month with mayor Ken Livingstone and other political worthies from London government.

An unscrupulous firm is charging companies eager for access to these powerful figures between £10,000 and £33,000. This sponsorship sum will buy them a place at the lunch and a few pages in a briefing supplement to celebrate "London Day".

Different levels of sponsorship bring different levels of benefit. Presumably the £33,000 sponsor will be sitting next to the great Ken himself. And the firm responsible for the jamboree? Er, step forward… the *New Statesman*!

JUST FANCY THAT!

"England star Rio Ferdinand has admitted he has no idea how he got his unusual name… But today the *Daily Mirror* can solve the mystery once and for all. The Leeds United centre-back is named after a river – the Rio Grande in Jamaica."

— *Daily Mirror*, 11 June, p. 5

"Rio Ferdinand has revealed his ultimate World Cup dream — a showdown with Brazil. The England defender, named after the Brazilian city, has been a fan since he first saw Brazil in the 1986 World Cup."

— *Daily Mirror*, 11 June, p. 53

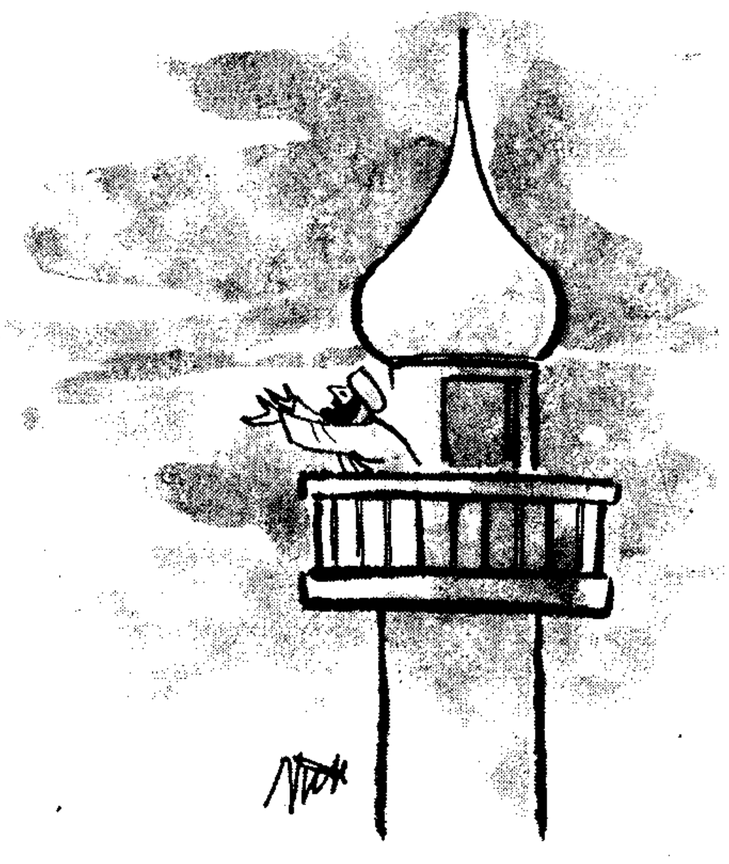
- Counselling will be available for recovering alcoholics from Rev. Simpson (Meet at the Main Entrance at 12 am)
- Complimentary Wine will be available throughout the day. (Happy Hour 11 am to 1 pm)

Charity Day, Latymer Foundation

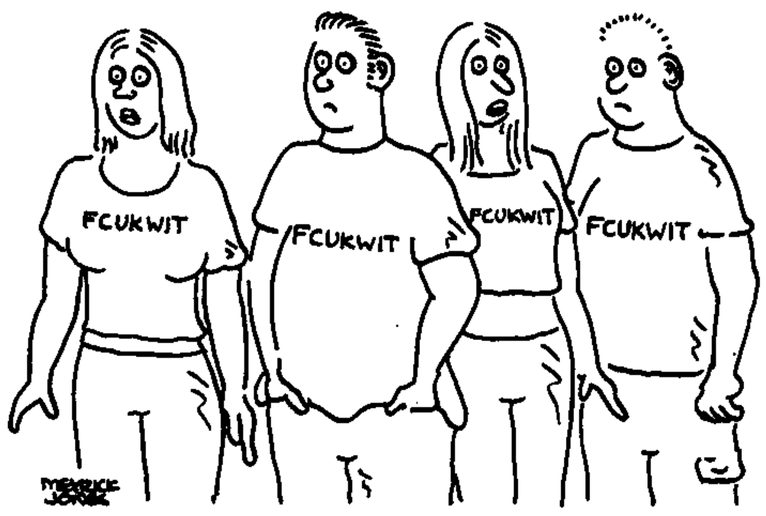
IS nowhere safe from *Spectator* theatre critic Toby Young? The ubiquitous self-publicist has now even turned up on the Friends Reunited website, with the following desperate appeal to fellow alumni of William Ellis school:

"I was recently booked to appear on *The Big Breakfast* to talk about a book I've just written but when the producer heard about it he said: 'I know that c***. I was at school with him. There's no f***ing way I'm having him on the programme.' I thought to myself: how are people like us ever going to compete with public school boys if all we ever do is f*** each other over? It's almost as if Old Ellisians have the opposite of an old boys' network: instead of giving each other a helping hand we trip each other up. We should stick together, just like Old Etonians.

"Then again, maybe the guy just didn't like *me*."



"Death to Israel, death to America, death to Britain. Until tomorrow, this is Ali Mohamed wishing you a pleasant evening"



THE Street of Shame's finest health hacks were thrilled when Seven Seas, the vitamin and minerals supplement company, whisked them on a junket to Norway.

The *Sunday Times*' Lois Rogers and the *Torygraph*'s Celia Hall were among those who signed up for the three-day jolly. But one day into their trip they began to suspect something fishy might be going on. Then it dawned on the pampered hacks that a Food Standards Agency report was due for publication while they were in Norway. Its subject? Dangerous dioxin levels in cod liver oil supplements – one of Seven Seas' major products.

In the end Seven Seas products were exonerated by the inquiry, but it's nice to know the hacks were safely tucked up with the vitamin company people just in case things had turned nasty.

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

HEY HO; hey ho, it's off to Mars we go. That is, if you believe the stories in the papers. The hapless American space agency NASA is on the verge of announcing a long-awaited manned mission to Mars.

The cue for all this was the discovery, by an orbiting space probe, of "billions of tonnes" of life-friendly water deep-frozen beneath the Martian soil. Ice that can be dug by spade-wielding astronauts in decades to come to rehydrate their Nasa-issue pot noodles.

Dedicated stargazers could be forgiven for experiencing a strong sense of *déjà-vu* when they read all this. For a start, this was not the first time the ice-on-Mars story had emerged. The discovery was made by a clever box of tricks called Mars Odyssey back in February, and was reported extensively at the beginning of March.

But no matter. Prompted by an imminent paper on the aforementioned ice in the journal *Science*, the *Sunday Times* decided to run the story again 12 weeks later. This time it was spotted by the Sunday-for-Monday newsdesks (news editors have a goldfish-like memory when it comes to science stories) and up, up and away we went again.

This wasn't even the first time ice had been discovered on the Red Planet. Buy a £1,000 telescope (somewhat cheaper than a £200m space probe) and you can discover ice on Mars yourself. Just find Mars (it's bright red, doesn't twinkle and when it's in the sky it's quite unmissable), twiddle the focus knob, and look for the big white bits at the poles. This was done in the 17th century, making "Ice on Mars" possibly the oldest yarn in the book.

But at least it was true. Ice (or at least hydrogen ions) have indeed been found. The murky bit is how all this gets turned into a commitment to put a human on Mars. Nasa's office of space science in Washington is now po-faced and denies saying anything.

In fact, there is no commitment, and no money, to send a man to Mars. Good fiction, shame about the science.

'Boffin'

HACKWATCH

Emma Jones

"SHE'S young, she's sharp and she'll say what YOU are thinking. Emma Jones is the bright, fresh new face of the *Sun* and her hard-hitting new column will give voice to a whole new generation." With this hyperbolic fanfare, and a huge colour photo, on 22 May the *Sun* announced the arrival of its new 27-year-old columnist – "the shooting star of the media".

Shome mishtake, shurely? Jones was a hackette on the *Sun*'s Bizarre column before departing a couple of years ago to become a disastrous editor of *Smash Hits* magazine. With such limited experience, would she really be able to "give it to you straight on everything from pop to politics", as the *Sun* promised? Emma had no doubts: "I hope to bring a fresh, young person's perspective on the world and I won't be afraid to tell it how I see it..."

23 May: A puff for Emma's first column, plus yet another big photo, fills most of the front page. "She may shock you… but you can't afford to miss our brilliant new columnist on page 11." Her main item reveals a "chilling fact", which only a fresh young voice could know: that, er, drugs are quite bad for you, but lots of teenagers try them. "It's a depressing fact of modern life," Emma discloses. So what can parents do? "Try to teach [youngsters] a good example so the choices they make are the right ones. And pray that drugs don't ensnare their children." Brilliant indeed.

30 May: Emma decides to display her talent for humour. "*This Morning* are launching a competition to find a new weather girl. I wonder how many failed wannabe *Pop Idol* contestants will apply? Though in fairness most are probably no strangers to the elements, what with selling *The Big Issue* outside supermarkets." Boom boom! "One superstitious England fan said he won't change his underpants during the World Cup to bring the team good luck. I hope for his sake – and his mates' – that there aren't too many penalty shootouts." Mercy, please! "While marvelling at the tanned body of David Beckham lounging on a sunbed I noticed he had strategically placed his mobile phone on his tackle. I only hope he didn't have the phone on vibrate." Ooh-er, missus!

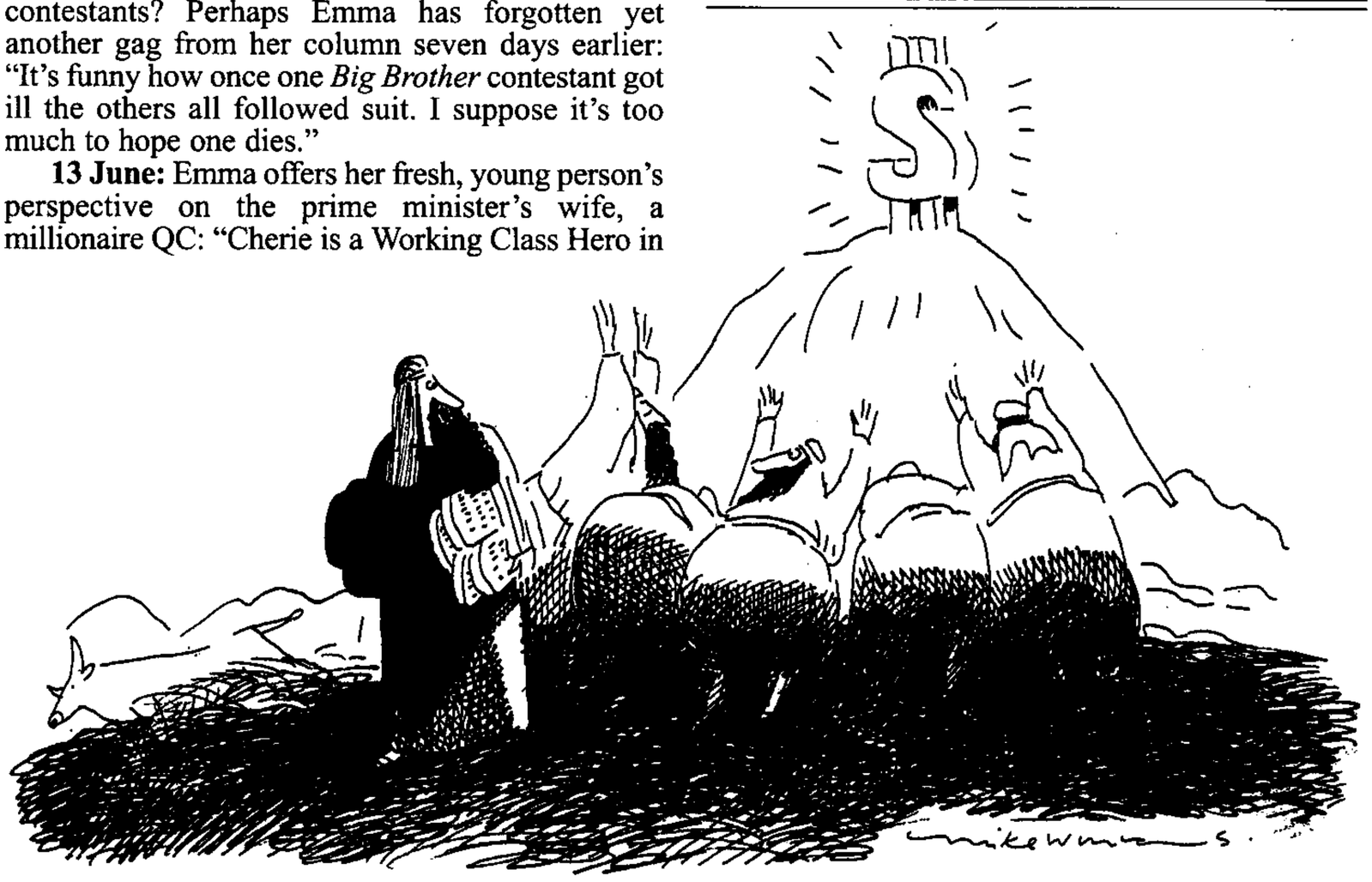
6 June: Exhausted after last week's laff-riot, Emma gets serious, attacking the "snobs" who see *Big Brother* as a symptom of moral decline and dumbing down. "To hate *Big Brother* is to hate reality," she declares. "The contestants are interested in food and diets, celebrity gossip, going out and drinking – just like you and me. Jade and Adele like comparing boobs – just like you and me." So who are these snooty critics that denigrate *Big Brother* contestants? Perhaps Emma has forgotten yet another gag from her column seven days earlier: "It's funny how once one *Big Brother* contestant got ill the others all followed suit. I suppose it's too much to hope one dies."

13 June: Emma offers her fresh, young person's perspective on the prime minister's wife, a millionaire QC: "Cherie is a Working Class Hero in the best tradition – that's why the snobs hate her… She is a normal mum." Emma is something of a feminist, it transpires. And she is distressed to notice that "now the battle for equality with men has largely been won, women have turned on themselves. In a week that has seen some of the biggest achievements ever by women, it's a shame that bitchiness is flourishing." But what's this elsewhere on the page? Why, a bitchy attack on celebrity groupie Alicia Douval, whose latest breast implants have left her with flabby boobs which "don't look too appetising".

20 June: A young British woman has been raped in Rhodes. "The people responsible for ITV's *Club Reps* series, which glorified the resort's sex-mad culture, should hang their heads in shame," Emma rages. "This kind of porn show – which featured Rachael Williams and Becky Assemakis – attracts the worst kind of men like a red rag to a bull… *Club Reps* was an ad for a bonkathon." To accompany the piece there's a large photo of sex-mad Rachael Williams and Becky Assemakis, naked except for tiny thongs. No doubt a headshot just couldn't be found. And, having denounced Rhodes as "a place characterised by ladettes in football strips flashing their boobs", no doubt Emma will be shocked to notice that page three today has two footie-made lovelies, draped in England and Brazil flags, flashing their, er, boobs.

A wider audience was able to sample her fresh brilliance two weeks ago when Emma appeared on the panel of *Question Time* alongside Teresa Gorman, Menzies Campbell and Chris Mullin. Her contribution to a discussion on spin-doctoring was the observation that "Labour hope to concentrate more on policy than they do on substance"; when the subject turned to American intelligence agencies, it turned out that she thought the CIA was the CID. The BBC was inundated with horrified emails: "Excruciating… I cringed… Please do not inflict that dreadful woman from the *Sun* on us again in a supposedly serious programme… Well, I've finally given up watching *Question Time*. The inane ramblings of that young woman on the panel tonight were – well, I can't believe that someone apparently so ill-informed could be asked to give her incoherent views on *QT*… Who on earth chose Emma Jones as a panellist?"

The answer to the last question is that *Sun* editor David Yelland encouraged the BBC to raise the profile of his new Voice of Yoof. And this is the point overlooked by *Sun* hacks who are laying bets on how soon the "shooting star" will be fired: it was Yelland's bright idea to hire her, and to get rid of her would be tantamount to a Blunkett-style admission that he blundered. Emma Jones may continue to delight and amaze for some time to come…



"Er... well, okay. But nothing else, alright?"

WHILE the cat's away, the mice will play... Just what were Gordon Brown and Jack Straw discussing so furtively in Ghandi's restaurant in Kennington on that day back in April when Tony Blair was having an "historic summit" with President George Bush in Texas?

Brown was accompanied by two aides, as was Straw; and this somewhat unlikely gathering will set Westminster tongues a-wagging. The brooding chancellor could have been discussing his forthcoming budget – or perhaps both men were focusing on important matters of state such as the referendum on the single currency.

Who are the two most prominent euro doubters in Tony Blair's cabinet? Step forward... Gordon Brown and Jack Straw!

MEANWHILE Iron "Brun" has been keeping very quiet in "new" Labour's media war. He said nothing about "cash for access" after Express proprietor Richard "Dirty" Desmond's £100,000 donation was revealed, and he has kept very quiet in the Black Rod affair too.

While Robin Cook, Jack Straw, John Reid and Charles Clarke mounted ferocious attacks on the "pious and hypocritical media", Brown was no where to be seen. Privately he is delighted that Labour party chairman Clarke blundered by appointing Tony Blair's fundraiser and Middle East fix-it man, Lord Levy, to head a new party committee overseeing, er, fundraising, even though it was Levy who had initiated contact between Number 10 and steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal.

Brown was equally pleased to see his old adversary Clarke getting a good duffing up by Fleet Street after the latter had exploded against his media tormentors in a recent *Times* article.

TONY Blair's feeble attempts to woo the increasingly restless comrades in the trade unions backfired recently when he deigned to open the new Holborn offices of the once mighty Transport & General Workers' Union.

As the curtains covering the ceremonial plaque refused to budge despite the Dear Leader's best efforts, Blair told the assembled company: "I understand that Ramsay Macdonald opened your previous headquarters in Smith Square back in 1928. I would rather follow in Ernie Bevin's shoes than in Ramsay Macdonald's footsteps." Some hope!

TONY BOOTH, redoubtable father-in law of Tony Blair, is involved in a dispute with his local Labour Party.

Item eight on the agenda of a recent party meeting in Longdendale, Greater Manchester, declared: "The actions of a member Mr A. Booth were raised and reported that he had not only played no part in the local elections but had made a press statement saying he would not vote.

"As a well known person this statement may have had an adverse effect on turn-out and on the Labour candidate. It was resolved to bring the issue to the attention of the CLP and to seek action against the individual."

The local apparatchiks were in a stew over a piece the actor had written in the local press saying politicians were failing to engage with the electorate. Booth said he had decided to withhold his own vote as a protest.

If the local party's threatened "action" is to try to boot out this critical member, it would be embarrassing for local MP James Purnell. He's an ambitious "new" Labour boy keen to keep in with the recalcitrant Booth's son-in-law.

HONOURS SPECIAL

THE Queen's birthday honours gave the clearest indication where Tony Blair's sympathies lie. Among the plethora of gongs for those in bombs or biotech, there was a single knighthood for a trades unionist.

He was Tony Young, deputy general secretary of the Communication Workers' Union until his retirement last month. But his honour was more than balanced by five knighthoods for business types: Roy Gardner of Centrica; Tom McKillop of AstraZeneca; Labour donor Gulam Noon; Brian Stewart of Scottish & Newcastle; and Keith Whitson of HSBC bank.

With Mick Jagger acting as decoy to draw media attention, who were the less savoury honours?

★ ARMS

MAKING weapons remains an honourable occupation, with CBEs going to Tom O'Neill, vice-president of Thales Defence; and Ken McIver, outgoing boss of missile, plane and tank part maker, TRW.

There were OBEs for Tim Brookman, marketing executive for military helicopter maker Augusta Westland; John Horton, operations director at armoured car maker Alvis; and Geoff Marston, salesman for Sheffield Forgemasters, specialists in military heavy metal.

MBEs went to lower ranks like John Bassett, engineer with privatised military boffins QinetiQ; John Connor, engineer for Raytheon; John Sadden, head of product safety at the ships division of BAE Systems; Ray Jones, a project team leader with BAE Systems; Amrat Palmer, director for naval firm John Crane/Smiths Industries; Ed Weir, test engineer for Hastings-based missile technology firm Computer Devices Co; and Peter Winwright, chief draughtsman for ejection seat maker Martin Baker Aircraft.

★ BIOTECH/DRUGS

DR GILLIAN SAMUELS, European policy director for drug giant Pfizer, got a CBE. Dr Samuels lobbied hard to win the European biotechnology patents directive, which allows firms to copyright parts of existing living plants, animals and even people. Thanks to her, the EU now recognises bio-piracy.

Labour's commitment to biotech went beyond these shores too, with OBEs for Dr Alison Taunton-Rigby and Dr Sally Ryan, two biotech businesswomen in the US. Former Monsanto director Dr Ryan runs Avant Immunotherapeutics, a firm profiting from anthrax vaccine for American soldiers. Dr Taunton-Rigby runs Aquila Biopharmaceuticals. Together they work hard in America's biotech trade organisations; and they told visiting British MPs how "alarmed" they were at the prospect of the "ill informed non-scientific debate" in the UK infecting America where the biotech industry has an easier ride.

★ PRIVATISATION

THE HONOURS stuck two fingers up to critics of Labour's transport privatisation plans.

Rail fat cat Phil White, chief executive of private rail operator National Express, grabbed a CBE. (National Express gets £587m a year subsidy from the taxpayer; and White took home £1.1m in salary, bonus and share options last year.)

Brian Appleton, vice-chair of London Transport, got a CBE. Appleton is crucial to the London Underground "PPP" scheme: it is his job to argue that the sell-off is safe. While few outside the government or the contractors think breaking up the tube and subcontracting work will help safety, Appleton was honoured "for services to safety management".

Ted Hesketh, boss of Northern Ireland's bus and train service Translink, also got a CBE. Transport in Northern Ireland is still state-owned, but Hesketh is planning a "public private partnership".

Other privatisers were rewarded too. Malcolm Stamp, chief executive of Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals Trust, won a CBE. (He was in charge of a PFI hospital deal where beds were cut and costs soared, but he gets his gong for defending the miserable sell-off to MPs.) And two water bosses were honoured: an MBE went to Tony Hill, managing director of Severn Trent; and Bob Baty, of South West Water, took home an OBE. Severn Trent is busy being fined for pollution in Sussex and, in March, South West Water was fined for pouring untreated sewage into the sea off Perranporth.

By giving an OBE to Judith Hanratty, BP company secretary, Tony Blair rewarded his favourite oil firm *and* privatisation: Hanratty also serves on the board of PFI quango Partnerships UK.

JULIA DROWN, Labour MP for South Swindon, has launched a sharp attack on the *Eye* in her local paper, the *Evening Advertiser*.

She said she was "losing her trust in the national press" following her nomination as Woman In the Eye in our last issue; and complained bitterly that she was not given a chance to reply to what she called the *Eye*'s "ridiculous" and "incorrect" article.

Nevertheless she did not contest a single fact in our account of her metamorphosis from opponent to champion of PFI, or in our account of her bizarre campaign to use the Commons select committee on health to smear Professor Allyson Pollock and the public policy unit at University College London.

MORE on Brian Cotter, the Lib Dem MP for Weston, and his recent visit to China with an all-party group of MPs and a stuffed dog called Andy.

Andy caused much bafflement when Mr Cotter pulled him out of his bag at meetings with officials, but there is a non-barking explanation. Andy belongs to children at Corpus Christi school in Mr Cotter's constituency, and they had asked the MP to take their mascot with him on his trip. So now you know.

TORY boy Andrew Rossindell has complained to BBC director-general Greg Dyke after a map of Romford – Rossindell's constituency – featured in a recent episode of the BBC show *Spooks*.

Rossindell wants a public apology as the episode in question featured violence and racism. "I am outraged," he fumed to local hacks. "The programme projected an utterly false and unacceptable image of the town." All this from the MP who, in the not so distant past, has entertained members of the far Right Italian Alleanza Nationale and spoken up for them .

Tough On Crime – How It Works

ANOTHER week... another corporate-sponsored law enforcement conference. The Metropolitan police "international perspective on crime, justice and public order" earlier in June, addressed by David Blunkett and Tony Blair, was sponsored by SchlumbergerSema.

This firm knows all about breaking rules. It used to be called SEMA; but in 2000 one of its directors, Hartmut Lademacher, sold £24m of his personal shares in the firm a week before poor half year results were announced. Directors are not allowed to deal in their own firm's shares in the two months before such announcements.

Lademacher resigned; but his actions and a profits warning sent share prices tumbling and the crisis meant SEMA was taken over by Schlumberger.

Sitting on the board of the new firm is another rulebreaker: former CIA director John Deutch, who, when he retired from the CIA, took home his personal computer. It was later discovered he had taken home a huge amount of top secret information on the computer, which he had subsequently made vulnerable to hackers when using the internet.

Deutch was being prosecuted for this terrifying laxness with secret material, but was pardoned by Bill Clinton in his controversial last minute presidential absolutions.

JUST when you thought "new" Labour could do no more to boost the private prison industry with orders for new adult and child jails, the *Eye* has learnt that the price of a prisoner place at Group 4's Altcourse jail in Liverpool is now approaching £60,000 a year – more than double the cost of an efficient state-run jail.

Moreover, as Group 4's guaranteed price per place apparently grows at a rate of inflation plus 2 percent every year, Altcourse is almost certain to be the first jail to break the £100,000 a year per inmate barrier. Great news for Group 4 shareholders perhaps – but less good for taxpayers and state-run jails which are cutting services to meet "efficiency" targets.

Given the shocking costs, revealed by home office insiders, it beggars belief how Altcourse and other private finance initiative jails have been "sold" to parliament and the public as "best value for money".

Officially the home office argues that the two costs cannot be compared because the private sector cost includes the capital cost of construction spread over the length of the private companies' contract. But jails are comparatively cheap to build and very expensive to run. According to insiders, if you take out capital costs, about 85 percent of public and private sector jail costs are directly comparable – casting doubts on parliamentary claims that private jails result in financial savings.

Now that Jeremy Colman, the assistant auditor general at the national audit office (NAO), has waded into the PFI debate suggesting government departments rely on "spurious" figures to prove that private deals provide value for money, private jails are looking more and more like an expensive confidence trick. Daylight robbery, anyone?

FOLLOWING news that Cafcass, the children and family court service, is still a shambles in some parts of the country, it emerges that the probation service is now lurching into crisis too.

First, a £10.2m nationwide budget cut has led to an immediate reduction in training and recruitment programmes. This, say probation chiefs, "makes the achievement of all targets virtually impossible".

Now, it appears the London service is near meltdown and facing an additional £8m budget shortfall. One of the main reasons for this, according to leaked budget meeting memos, is the exorbitant cost of the service's new computer maintenance contract with Integris UK.

As if the millions wasted on the useless Crams system (see *Eyes passim*) weren't enough, the probation service has now signed up to a maintenance deal which leads to a charge of £11,600 every time a technician is called out on a Sunday. A paper issued by the National Probation Directorate shows that on a weekday evening charges are £2,661, while on a Saturday they rise to £8,704. To move a computer from one office to another can cost up to £12,000 – all this on top of the annual desk top charge of £485 per machine.

Napo, the probation officers' union, has learnt that 250 staff vacancies have been frozen, some temporary staff contracts will be cut and up to 220 staff may be made redundant. This comes at a time when there is *increasing* demand for supervision of offenders and court service work.

THE TORIES – REMEMBER THEM?

FRANCIS MAUDE MP has at last launched his groovy new think-tank Conservatives for Change – CChange, *geddit?* – which hopes to make the Tory party more friendly to gays, wimmin, ethnic minorities, etc.

Alongside earnest messages from Maude and Oliver Letwin, the group's website includes a piece by one Douglas Smith, a keen supporter of CChange. The article, originally published in the *Daily Telegraph*, declares that "above all, the next generation of Conservative MPs must be 'nice'."

Older *Eye* readers may recall this "nice" chap as the legendary Douglas "Dougie" Smith who – clad in paramilitary fatigues – was a leading stormtrooper of the loony-right faction that dominated the Federation of Conservative Students in the 1980s. (Elected as FCS vice-chairman at the 1985 Loughborough conference, he claimed to be a student at Napier College but was nothing of the sort: following an inquiry by central office, his election was declared null and void.)

In April 1990 Smith was arrested by Hammersmith police after allegedly threatening to kill a fellow FCS member, Toby Baxendale, who had won the affections of Dougie's former girlfriend. After a night in the cells, however, he was released. He then found employment at the shadowy Committee for a Free Britain, run by right-wing tycoon and Lord Lucan lookalike, David Hart.

In the 1997 general election, Dougie campaigned energetically for Sir Jammy Fishpaste's Referendum Party, but since then he appears to have "come home" to the Tories – and, implausibly, turned into something of a liberal. The soothing, inclusive, PC language of his contribution to Maude's CChange is quite a contrast to his 1985 FCS internal publication *Smash the Red Menace*, which advised Tories on how to disrupt NUS conferences: "Always be provocative... e.g. 'You red fascist scum.' A true master should be able to provoke self-righteous Leftists into prolonging a two-minute speech into a quarter of an hour orgy of chaos... Think about staging a mock fight at the side of the stage."

If Maude, Letwin and Co get nowhere with their new caring'n'sharing approach, perhaps they could keep this in reserve as Plan B.

£20 to fight crime in England and Wales

Local Government First (LGA newsletter)

Court Circular

THE "Black Rod affair" has made Buckingham Palace a bit jittery of late, especially after Alastair Campbell withdrew his whinge to the press complaints commission and the story – that Downing Street had tried to beef up Tony Blair's role in the Queen Mother's funeral arrangements – suddenly grew several more legs.

Sir Robin Janvrin, Brenda's private secretary and normally the most unflappable of flunkeys, was panicked into believing the press pack was at the palace gates. His panic followed an internal communications office briefing memo suggesting the preparation of a press release giving the palace's version of events surrounding the fiasco. (The same memo also sought authorisation for a press release offering more openness on royal finances designed to counter stories about the extravagant lifestyles of Prince and Princess Michael of Kent. Only the second one has been issued – so far.)

Eye 1053 told how Downing Street had initially contacted Lt Col Sir Malcolm Ross, comptroller of the lord chamberlain's office, for guidance on the PM's role. Ross played a straight bat, told Blair he wasn't involved under Operation Tay Bridge (the QM's own funeral arrangements) and that was the sum total of the palace's direct involvement. So why should Janvrin have worried?

Sir Michael Willcocks, aka Black Rod, the Queen's messenger in the Lords, then began to be badgered by Claire Sumner and other Downing Street civil servants about Tony's role. A rattled Willcocks sought the advice of Buckingham Palace before issuing his ruling. The request for clarification went to Janvrin... who consulted Ross... who this time referred to Sir Alastair Aird, the QM's private secretary. They all agreed that Blair had no role and referred Willcocks to the lord great chamberlain, the Marquess of Cholmondley, Brenda's chief man at Westminster. It was Cholmondley who insisted on the precedence of his office – and that of the speaker and the lord chancellor – over that of the PM. And he won the day.

But as the number of consultees – and Downing Street phone calls – grew, so did Black Rod's uncertainty. Willcocks stalled for as long as he could before issuing his final snub to the PM in a short note in which he relied in part on citing Buckingham Palace as backing his actions. Since then Willcocks's office has often referred to him being a member of the royal household in an attempt to create an impression of neutrality as accusations of political bias are thrown at him.

Aware of Downing Street's potential to spin against the palace, Janvrin began hurriedly trying to distance the palace from events as the whole saga exploded. But the palace does have some ammunition. At least two copies of Black Rod's infamous "killer memo" to the PCC justifying his actions exist somewhere inside its gilded corridors.

'Flunkey'

"Well, someone must have wanted this meeting"

EYE TV

Big Brother (C4)

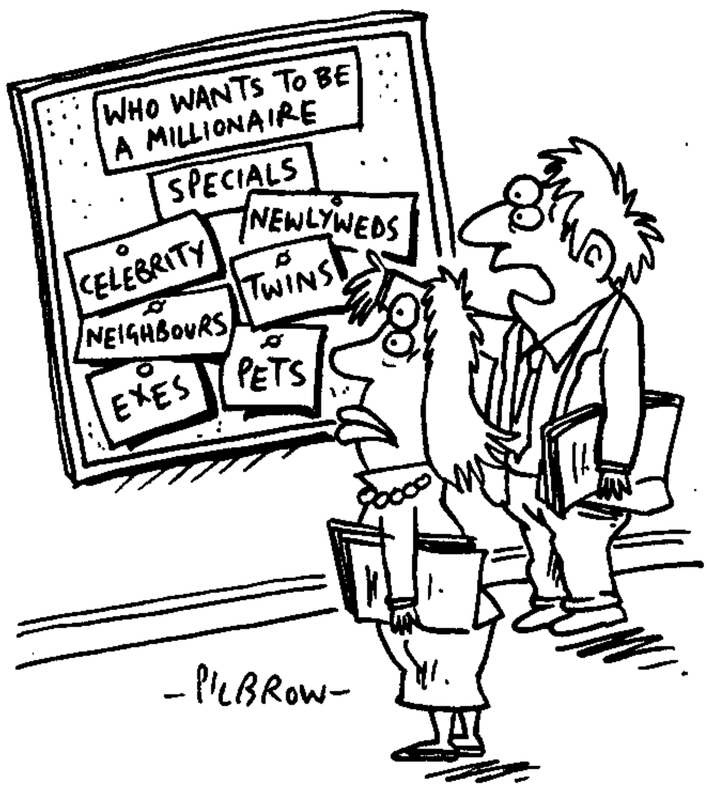
AUDIENCE figures are up, media interest has never been fiercer, more and more viewers are calling in or texting their vote... And yet it's not as good, is it? It's not *nearly* as good.

Everybody knows it, and everybody not intimately connected with C4 and Endemol is saying it. Indeed, we could be watching the most popular and successful TV franchise in recent history being destroyed. How on earth has this been allowed to happen?

You can't blame the contestants, or at least not entirely. These 12 were chosen from 150,000 possibles, as C4 publicity never tires of telling us. So who was doing the choosing? Did anyone over 30 apply? Or were you automatically disqualified if you didn't constantly use the word "wicked"?

Last year, no doubt by accident, several moderately bright people found their way into the house. This year the acceptance criteria have clearly been much tougher. Registered thickies like Jonny and PJ roam the grounds, wondering which armpit to scratch next. Until last week there was Lee, who was so dim he had the Nike tick tattooed on his upper arm, with the word "LEE" written underneath as an aide memoire. And of course there's Jade, this year's Helen, who thinks "East Angular" is near Tunisia, and Sherlock Holmes is a real person, married to Mother Teresa... but on second thoughts we'll keep her, in the hope that she'll say even stupider things in the weeks to come.

The more quick-witted inmates, needless to say, have already gone. Sunita fled within days. Alison was fat and black and voted out by gays, who preferred leering at Alex (the one who looks like Brad Pitt and sounds like Ken Livingstone). And token oldie Sandy escaped over the roof, in what Dermot O'Leary, the cretin who hosts *Big Brother's Little Brother* on E4, called "one of the defining moments in TV history, a bit like remembering where you were when JFK was shot". (Oh yeah?) Every week, when two of the remaining housemates are nominated, it's hard to choose between them, because you usually want both to go.



"I think we've used up all our lifelines"

More disastrous than the contestant selection, though, is the division of the house into "rich" and "poor" sides. Gone in a flash are the social interactions and gradations that made the first two series so fascinating. In their place comes simple conflict, fomented by the vast difference in conditions experienced by the two camps. *Big Brother* previously seemed quite a benevolent dictator; now he's proactive, even sadistic. No one is allowed to read books (which, among other things, will deter anyone with a brain from applying next year). The weekly task now takes half an hour and doesn't need to be practised or prepared for. There's nothing for these people to do. They're miserable. It's miserable watching them.

To blame, almost certainly, are Channel 4's legendarily dimwitted executives, who are only interested in what's cool and will have complained that the last series had too many old people in it (ie over 30, like all Channel 4 executives); and the show's new young producers, who clearly don't understand why the two previous series did so well.

Indeed, the first hint of trouble could be seen a few weeks ago in a "how not to get on *Big Brother*" programme, in which these producers, all aged 12, were seen rejecting wannabes with the sort of crazed glee usually only seen on the faces of Nazi war criminals.

Last year one critic identified the particular genius of *Big Brother* – that no one involved wields absolute power over it. The producers may have constructed it all in the edit suite, but they knew they would have been nowhere without the inmates providing the entertainment and the viewers deciding what happens next. In *Big Brother 3* this balance has been altered. The producers are now manipulating the inmates shamelessly. The inmates are doing what the producers want them to, and the viewers are bored. Even the famed Blowjob Incident failed to set hearts racing — an unimaginable idea a year ago. A creative turning point, then, although the figures will conceal this for a while, and help most of those responsible for this fiasco to keep their jobs.

'Couch Potato'

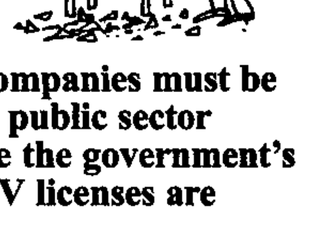
DUMB BRITAIN

Steve Wright Show, Radio 2

Wright: The leader of the orchestra plays which musical instrument?
Contestant: The baton.

The Vault, ITV

Davina McCall: Fidel Castro is President of which Caribbean country?
Contestant: Jamaica... Barbados... Rio... pass.
McCall: What's the cube of 8?
Contestant: Four... one... two... three... four... (etc, etc)



Family Fortunes, ITV

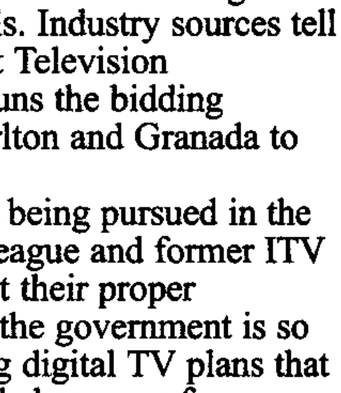
Les Dennis: Name something sold by gypsies.
Contestant: Bananas.

DUMB AUSTRALIA

The Afternoon Programme Quiz, ABC 774

Presenter: Who killed Cock Robin?
Contestant: Oh God, I didn't even know he was dead.

MEDIA NEWS



FAILING hospitals, schools and local authorities must all be handed over to the private sector, but failed companies must be given more chances to win public sector contracts. That seems to be the government's message as far as digital TV licenses are concerned.

Bankrupt ITV Digital was an abject failure, with its owners Carlton and Granada walking away from their responsibilities – like the £180m they owed the football league. Amazingly, though, Carlton and Granada have come together *again* to bid for the ITV Digital licence. And instead of being laughed out of court, their bid is being taken seriously at the highest levels. Industry sources tell the *Eye* that the Independent Television Commission (ITC), which runs the bidding process, has encouraged Carlton and Granada to bid again.

Carlton and Granada are being pursued in the courts both by the football league and former ITV digital staff who failed to get their proper redundancy cash. However, the government is so desperate to rescue its failing digital TV plans that workers rights or much-needed revenue for football clubs all come second. A spokesperson for the football league tells the *Eye* that they are disgusted by the way Carlton and Granada are trying to shrug off their debts and bid again.

DESPITE the BBC's "Cutting the Crap" campaign, more crap is landing on producers' desks.

The latest is a CD ROM and booklet called "the source", a "useful resource of essential facts" from Audience and Consumer Research. Most of the essential facts are nothing of the sort; but it is perhaps useful for programme makers to be reminded that despite heavy investment, BBC Choice achieves 0.57 percent of audience share, BBC News 24 manages just 0.24 percent and BBC Knowledge a minute 0.05 percent.

"GORGEOUS" George Alagiah got into trouble after telling *Radio Times* that BBC News 24 is nothing more than "a treadmill only marginally updated on the hour".

Allegiah presents BBC4's nightly news bulletin and BBC suits are sensitive to any suggestion that the two channels compete against each other. His apology, therefore, included a lot of guff about the channels "complementing" each other instead – a point made easy to explain thanks to the huge amount of material they share.

There is no doubt, though, that the taunts hit Lewis harder than Tyson's punches ever did. 'How can they call me gay?' he snarled after Tyson had delivered his 'faggot' insult. 'I am 120 per cent a man's man.'

Daily Mail

GOING LIVE

ARTS and media expert Nick Higham was at Ascot for BBC News 24 to deliver the news that the Queen had extended the Royal Ascot race meeting. And very illuminating it was too.

Would the extension affect the competition? he was asked. "All I know about horses is that they have a leg at each corner," said Higham with commendable honesty. "Anything else about horse racing and I haven't a clue."

"Can Johnny come out to eat?"

O·B·N

On Wednesday night at the BAFTA screening of his new film Unfaithful, I wallowed in the irresistible presence of Richard Gere. The man is desirability incarnate... the man is living proof that, where sex appeal is concerned, there's absolutely nothing like someone who is comfortable in their own skin.

VANESSA FELTZ
Sunday Express

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

JUST FANCY THAT!

Detail of Kama Sutra dress worn by Denise van Outen at the premiere of *Bombay Dreams*.

Evening Standard – showing balls

Sunday Times – showing no balls

"Is the show hot or mild?"

NEWS that Capita (aka Crapita) has teamed up with the BBC to administer TV licensing in a contract worth £500m has not impressed workers at the Glasgow call centre which deals with the BBC's Helpline.

The contract to handle Helpline calls was won recently by Crapita, whose director of human resources is Joanne Bacon. Ms Bacon is currently dealing with complaints from the broadcasting union BECTU about the firm's decision to change the shift pattern of workers at the centre so that they can work any shift (including late nights) that Crapita dictates.

Paul McManus, Scottish organiser of BECTU, wrote to Ms Bacon hoping to resolve the problem by the old-fashioned method of "dialogue". He was given the usual Crapita brush-off; and call centre staff are now balloting for a strike.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

King Alfred Hitchcock

AD NAUSEAM

BACK in February we reported how the *Dirty Express* had splashed on a series of unmissable promotions that turned out to be no such thing (*Eye 1047*).

From "Free concert tickets for every reader" that were neither free nor for every reader, to the "Free anti-fat pills that really work" (they weren't and they didn't), *Express* readers were left disgruntled.

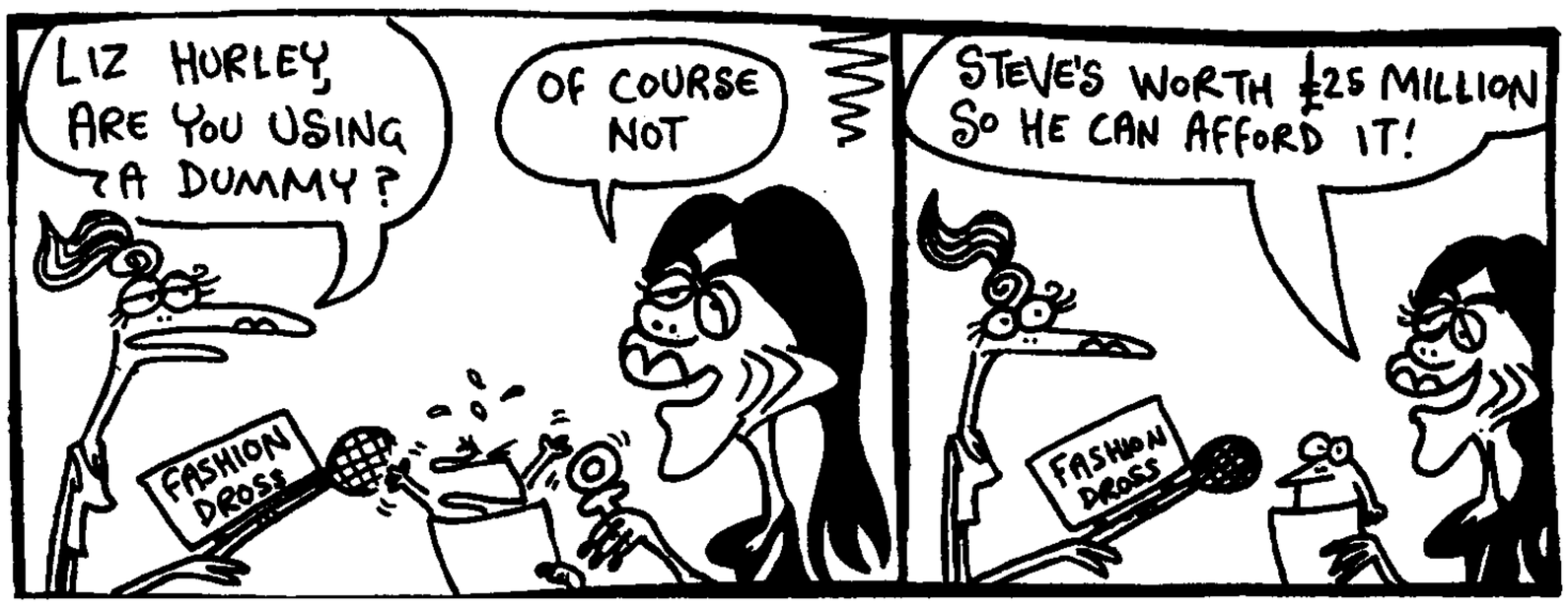
The "2 for 1 trips to France" and "Return flights all over the USA for every reader" plugs were equally misleading, and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld complaints against the paper on all counts.

Yet a fortnight ago Richard Desmond's rag clocked up its *seventh* rap from the ASA in 12 months. The front-page promo was offering an "amazing £4m flight offer giveaway... 20,000 free flights… buy your paper and book today... pick your destination including... Athens". You can guess the rest: on the day the promotion started there was no flight available to Athens.

The ASA is of course a self-regulatory body; and when advertisers persistently flout their codes of practice, the only genuine recourse is with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT). Will the ASA now be reporting Dirty Des, proprietor of the *Express* and Labour party donor, to the OFT for legal action under the "control of misleading advertisements regulations 1988?" Best not to hold your breath.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



DOING THE ROUNDS

Honours uneven

THE whistleblowers who lost their jobs after raising concerns about patient safety in Hammersmith Hospital radiology department (*Eye* 977 onwards) are unimpressed by the award of a CBE to Dr Sue Atkinson.

Atkinson is regional director of public health and medical director for London, but formerly occupied the same position in the South Thames region. After a widely discredited internal Hammersmith inquiry, Atkinson took office for the first external inquiry. Despite evidence that the problems were wide ranging at the hospital, Atkinson approved very narrow terms of reference, which turned the inquiry into a nonsense.

After it became apparent that the inquiry was not addressing either patient safety or staff victimisation, one of the whistleblowers, Professor Peter Dawson, went to see Atkinson. "She warned me not to make too much fuss but to 'move on' or my career would be damaged. I reminded her it was already. She said I would have no future career at all if I continued to fight. I said that I'd been set up. She said she agreed but that I must 'move on' for my own sake."

To his credit, the then health secretary Frank Dobson spotted the cover-up (with a bit of gentle prodding) and ordered another inquiry to be conducted by Prof Ian Cameron and bypassing Atkinson's regional office, which seemed incapable of getting to the heart of the matter. Dobson also ordered Cameron to agree the terms of reference (TOR) with the whistleblowers.

Dawson recalls that "immediately after the announcement of this new inquiry I got the first of several phone calls at home from Sue Atkinson trying to discuss TOR with me. She was impervious to the response that it was not her remit any more. I said I was not willing to discuss it with her but she persisted and indeed called me again from her mobile in the car."

Ironically, any unpalatable truths about the Hammersmith debacle that may have rubbed off on Atkinson and others have to this day remained secret. Health minister John Hutton and now health secretary Alan Milburn have refused to publish the Cameron report despite assurances from Dobson that it would be (*Eyes passim*). Dawson fights on but retains a deep suspicion of Atkinson. "The worst thing she did was to warn me off in a 'wouldn't like that nice little career of yours to get any more damaged would we?' sort of way, even though she admitted she knew I'd been set up. Awarding a CBE to her is a clear message to whistleblowers that they are wasting their time. The people who screw them will get the rewards".

Safety, Secrecy and Impotence

The lack of power and independence of the government's National Patient Safety Agency was demonstrated again by the suppression of full publication of its pilot study into "adverse incidents and near misses" at 28 trusts. Whether Milburn's last-minute block was for fear of frightening the horses or because of genuine fears about the accuracy of the data is immaterial. The instinct of the agency itself was to publish in full, until it was ordered not to. Independent, my arse.

And even if it were independent, it seems unlikely that the current centralised model will do much to instil the essential safety culture at the front-line. The most frightening repeated error the NPSA picked up was mixing up identical bags or ampoules of saline (harmless) and potassium chloride (lethal), a cock-up which MD made some 15 years ago (*Eyes passim*). The NHS needs an independent safety agency in every region, continuously monitoring and acting on single errors, not waiting until lots of fatalities happen to spot a trend.

M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

HOW many more deaths are needed on the railways to convince the health and safety executive (HSE) that relying on casual labour for rail maintenance doesn't work?

The *Eye* has been highlighting such problems since 1995, and even Railtrack now seems to appreciate the flaws in its use of contractors like Jarvis and Balfour Beatty. However, an HSE report has just concluded that contracting maintenance was basically OK on the railways... because it works in other industries.

Once again the HSE, which allowed cast-iron safety commitments to be sacrificed for rail privatisation (*Eye* 983), has avoided putting unwelcome pressure on the government. It is also protecting its own backside, failing to explain why it did nothing for eight years to stop Railtrack's shoddy maintenance practices.

The report does have some telling statistics, though. When BR handed over to Railtrack in 1994, its *entire* rail staff – including engineers, drivers, guards, signallers and managers – numbered fewer than 116,000. Now, nearly 119,000 people hold certificates to work on railway tracks. That indicates the alarming extent of ad hoc working in this technical field; but the HSE, which admits it doesn't know how many people work for rail contractors, sees no great cause for alarm. It merely notes that the industry needs at least 1,000 engineers and 3,000 "other workers", as the 119,000 aren't sufficiently skilled.

Nor does it raise an eyebrow that a staggering *1,469 different companies* employ those workers. It regards this as a "network" rather than a mêlée competing to maximise profits.

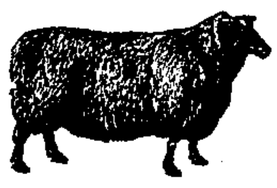
The report points out that most track workers now carry Sentinel identity cards. Railtrack reassuringly flagged these up after the Potters Bar accident and describes them as "a driving-licence-type competency card". But the cards prove only that holders have been told how to avoid being killed as they work. They don't guarantee competency, or that workers won't interfere with tracks while trains are still running on them (*Eyes* 997, 1007 & 1036); or erect scaffolding at stations which touches live 25,000-volt electric apparatus (*Eye* 997); or miswire signals to send trains on collision courses (*Eyes* 882 and 967).

The HSE's conclusion that this cock-eyed system will work when Railtrack improves its management of contractors relies on the assumption that there's no practical difference between railways and industrial sites "where use of contractors does not, of itself, result in poor health and safety standards". But at nuclear and chemical plants contractors work under the noses of managers; on the railways, contractors and sub-contractors are left to their own devices miles from the nearest Railtrack manager.

The alternative is to bring rail maintenance in house. Incredibly, the HSE's report ignores this, other than taking a passing swipe at it by citing the 1988 Clapham Junction crash and London Underground's conviction last year for a safety cock-up. Both incidents happened in times of serious under-funding (BR received £446m from the government in 1988-89). But instead of working out why Railtrack has made such a mess while receiving billions in direct and indirect subsidies, the HSE observes that yet more bureaucracy (including extra work for HSE employees) and yet more resources are needed to improve the contracting system.

PS: The HSE's highly complacent document was published on the day the London *Evening Standard* revealed how one of its hacks had walked in to a rail maintenance job without interview or references being checked and with minimal training.

'Dr B. Ching'



DOWN ON THE FARM

MANY bizarre statements have emanated from the Department for the Elimination of Farming and Rural Affairs in recent months – but none odder than last September's announcement by Elliot Morley that if BSE were ever discovered in sheep, the government would immediately kill all the 40 million sheep in Britain.

Of course BSE has never actually been found to occur naturally in sheep. However, this has not prevented scientists receiving millions of pounds of public money for trying to find the link. Until recently the star of this show was Professor John Collinge of St Mary's, Paddington. Regular as clockwork he would produce yet another paper, usually published in some obscure American scientific journal, claiming the link between sheep and BSE was now but a step away. This would then be featured as top news by the gullible hacks in the BBC's scaremongering department.

But now the tale has a curious twist. Prof Collinge, it seems, has been written out of this lucrative script. And who should have replaced him but the *Eye*'s old friend Prof Roy Anderson, formerly of the Oxford University zoological department.

In May 2000, it will be recalled, Prof Anderson was removed from his Oxford chair and also from the board of the Wellcome Trust after it was discovered that the trust had awarded £4m in research funding to a unit studying the epidemiology of infectious diseases of which he was the director. Prof Anderson and his team moved to Imperial College, and in March 2001, on the urging of his old friend and former Oxford colleague Prof Sir John Krebs, now chairman of the Food Standards Agency, Anderson was appointed the government's chief scientific adviser on the foot-and-mouth epidemic.

Here, his main contribution was to promote the infamous contiguous cull policy, which resulted in the deaths of more than nine million healthy animals and was recently savaged by a whole array of leading scientific witnesses to the European parliament's FMD inquiry.

Last January Prof Anderson and his team made a new bid for fame and fortune. In a letter to *Nature*, they urged that, just in case that elusive link between sheep and BSE should ever be established, the government should as a precautionary measure ban the traditional use of lamb intestines to make natural sausage skins, for which in making good-quality sausages there is no substitute.

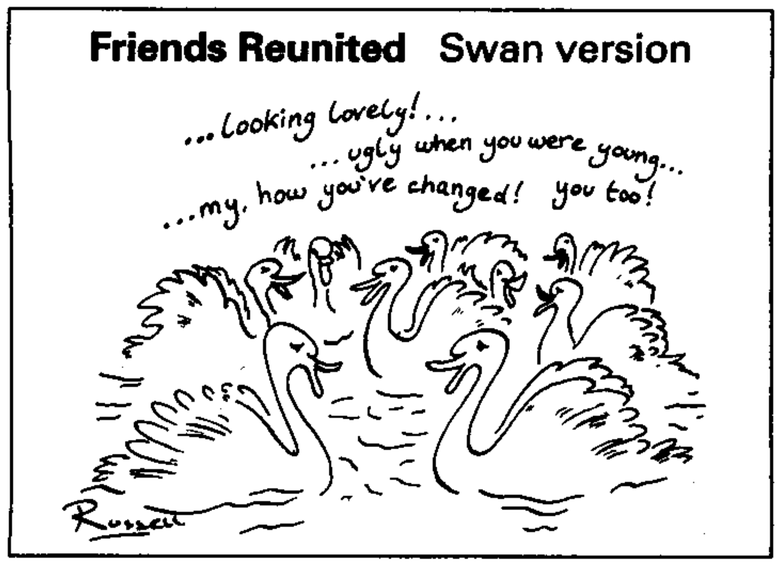
This was not a scientific paper. It was not peer-reviewed. But the "research" on which it was based, a footnote revealed, was paid for by Krebs's Food Standards Agency and the Wellcome Trust, from which Anderson was sacked in May 2000. Now, solely on the basis of this "opinion", the FSA has approved a recommendation by its own "core stakeholder committee" calling for an EU-wide ban on natural sausage skins.

Chairman of this committee was Sir John Krebs (despite the recent Rubery report by a former senior civil servant strongly recommending that he should not be allowed to chair the committee). Chairing the FSA board meeting which approved the recommendation of the Krebs committee that the FSA should accept the opinion of Krebs's friend Anderson was none other than, er, Krebs himself.

Not considered to be a "stakeholder" in this issue, and therefore not consulted, was the natural sausage skins industry, worth £30m a year and employing 2,000 people, all of whom will be put out of work if the Krebs-Anderson recommendation is put into effect.

'Muckspreader'

Friends Reunited Swan version



ROTTEN BOROUGHS

NATIONAL GRRR-ID

INSPECTOR Knacker is busy investigating the award in Lincolnshire of a £5.4m National Grid for Learning contract, the Grid being a £1.8bn government scheme to link Britain's schools on the information superhighway.

The Tory county council put the contract out to tender in 1998 and 12 firms quickly applied. The companies were duly assessed and put in order of preference with a firm called Data Base (Nottm) placed an embarrassing 12th on the list of preferred bidders.

There was some surprise then when the award went to none other than Data Base (Nottm) – but the successful tender was splendid news for Data Base's non-executive director John Hayes, who also happens to be the Tory MP for South Holland.

Documents surrounding the contract now reveal that the council broke its own regulations and government requirements when it took on Data Base. What's more, it's been revealed that Judith Davis, acting team manager in Lincolnshire's IT division, wrote a memo to other officers saying she was concerned by the "obvious bias in favour of Data Base". Council control of the project was later condemned as "ineffective".

Mr Hayes resigned from his post in December 1999. His former employers are now submitting themselves to a thorough probing by the local Knacker.

● **HATS off to Lincolnshire county councillors who were recently given the chance to get rid of their disgraced council leader, Jim Speechley. The Tory leader was condemned in an auditor's report for creating a "climate of fear" at the council and putting staff under "improper pressure" to take unethical and illegal decisions (*Eye* 1054). So surely the disgusted councillors kicked Speechley out of office when they had the chance? Er, no. He slunk back in with 34 votes out of a possible 76.**

EALING COMEDY

THE merry-go-round of private firms being threatened with the sack for poor performance by one council while being awarded a contract with another, shows no sign of abating. Take the latest example of Tory-run Westminster and Labour-run Ealing councils.

Councillors in Westminster recently agreed to put out to tender 48 services across seven departments, ranging from libraries and parking to policy and communications, a move which will see 80 percent of Westminster's staff transfer to the successful bidder. In the event only two firms, Capita and Vertex, put in a bid. With Crapita's tender ruled out of order on the grounds of non-compliance, Vertex, a subsidiary of Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, is set to win the £1bn, 10-year contract on 2 July – unless Westminster Tories heed the warnings of their colleagues in Ealing.

Local Tories there promised in their election manifesto to boot out Vertex if elected. This followed Vertex's disastrous stab at running the council's housing benefit service, which the Tory election manifesto described as "appalling".

Unfortunately for those hoping to see the back of Vertex in Ealing, Labour kept control of the council. Meanwhile Tory-controlled Westminster has little option but to embrace Vertex – unless it junks its much cherished plan to sell its services to the private sector.

SO MUCH HOT AYR

WHEN Scottish island dwellers heard about a government grant called the Special Islands Needs Allowance they were thrilled at the thought of extra money for their cash-starved services.

And they were certain there must have been a terrible mistake when they later learned that £500,000 of the Allowance money from the Scottish Executive had gone straight to the coffers of North Ayrshire council rather than the islands themselves.

Alas, there was no mistake. A nationalist MP took the matter to the Scottish parliament, asking Labour's finance minister Andy Kerr where the money should be spent. Kerr stated that the Islands money did not need to be spent on the islands at all. To add insult to injury, he told the bemused MP that there was actually no monitoring of where the money was spent.

BLACK MARKS

THE shortcomings of Southwark council's education "provider" are becoming horribly apparent.

Atkins Education (formerly known as WS Atkins) won the seven-year contract worth £1bn in April last year after KPMG recommended that the council seek a private sector "partner". Foremost among the criticisms surfacing is the firm's treatment of the 30 percent of staff who transferred from Southwark to Atkins and are black.

A steady stream of complaints by black staff include claims that they are bullied by white managers, singled out for dismissal and redundancy, refused promotion and training and given menial tasks far below their capability. They also allege that black managers have had less qualified white managers "placed" in supervisory positions over them, dubbed by one employee as "Friends Reunited".

The union Unison held a meeting of education staff in mid-June to establish if there was a pattern of racism at Atkins or whether these were isolated cases. At the meeting it soon became clear that morale was exceedingly low as worker after worker came forward saying they had been treated unfairly by Atkins on the basis of their colour.

Examples included four staff who worked in one section together, two were black, two white. The two black staff had to wait six months before becoming entitled to sick pay but the two white staff received sick pay from day one. A black human resources worker told the meeting that black staff are consistently told to provide copies of their qualifications while the same demand is not made of white staff.

Atkins already faces four employment tribunal cases where staff are claiming racial discrimination and two other black staff have complained directly to the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). Now Unison has also submitted its dossier to the CRE.

All this is not bad for a "service provider" in a borough where 30 percent of the populace is from an ethnic minority and whose Southwark operation is based in the former Labour Party HQ in Walworth Road, renamed John Smith House. The former Labour leader must be spinning in his grave…

● The British Museum's Great Court is the work of Norman Foster's firm and not that of Richard Rogers as we said in issue 1055.

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

LAST summer's AS pass rates for mathematics were almost 20 percent below those of other subjects, with one third of pupils failing the exam. Schools were thus thankful when the government held a review.

Teachers already suspected what the problems were. Firstly, the syllabus was too big to be covered in the time allowed. Secondly, the material in parts of the syllabus required too much mathematical maturity for students at this level.

And the review's response? It announced that it was not prepared to change the syllabus until more evidence had been gathered. The only concession was that sixth form pupils could take one of the exams a few months later than before. But maths teachers were only informed of this decision just before Easter when much of their preparation had already been done.

Those students who suffer from lower than expected results this summer will be delighted to know how hard the government worked to sort this problem out.

Plans are already afoot for next year's exams. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority has suggested that only pupils with a B grade at GCSE should be allowed to take the subject at AS level. Maths teachers fear this will encourage pupils to believe maths is an elitist subject and the pool of students will shrink even more as a result.

ON THE day that a team from Norton secondary school in Letchworth travelled to Tate Modern in London to receive a school's curriculum award in recognition of services to the local community, Hertfordshire county council signed its death warrant.

Despite its promotion of citizenship, social inclusion and care for others, Norton – the oldest secondary school in the town – has fallen victim to teacher shortages. Ofsted inspectors had damned the school because it could not attract enough properly qualified staff. It blamed poor teaching on the part of temporary overseas and unqualified staff, who were filling the teaching gaps. In some classes students were "learning little or nothing", said the inspectors.

Ofsted put the school into special measures and gave it 40 days to come up with an action plan. But instead of addressing the school's overwhelming problem of recruiting and retaining staff, the local education authority decided – to the dismay of parents – to close the school and expand three others to take Norton's 450 pupils.

The fact that Herts county council intends to sell "surplus educational and hospital sites" for housing in the much sought-after leafy areas, and that Norton's building and playing fields would provide a lucrative "windfall", is of course coincidental.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON — KNIFE & PACKER

I'M MOVED BY THESE PICTURES... THEY SHOW A DYNAMIC GRASP OF COMPOSITION AND A FLAMBOYANT, ALMOST BAROQUE, USE OF COLOUR
I'M NOT CONVINCED. I FEEL THAT THEY'RE SOMEHOW DEEPLY FLAWED THERE'S A LACK OF RESONANCE
HI GUYS, ADMIRING LOTTE'S FINGER PAINTINGS I SEE. YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT HER MACARONI COLLAGES - THE USE OF LINGUINE IS FRANKLY STARTLING

NOOKS and CORNERS

LEVEDON Pier is the most elegant of Victorian seaside piers. Built in 1867, its austere iron structure of elliptical arches projects almost a thousand feet into the Bristol Channel. Its survival today is somewhat miraculous.

In 1970 two spans collapsed; and in 1979 the local authority applied for permission to pull down the rest. But Clevedon Pier always had friends; and after a public inquiry, the then environment secretary Michael Heseltine refused consent.

In 1981 the pier was taken on by the Clevedon Pier Trust and, after many struggles and with help principally from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the iron structure was dismantled, repaired and reerected. Restoration was completed in 1998 and Clevedon Pier is now visited by 120,000 people a year. Earlier this year, on the advice of English Heritage, its listing was upgraded to grade I.

All in all an inspiring and heroic story. So it seems curious that North Somerset council, having been persuaded to match a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to complete the restoration, is prepared to see the setting of Clevedon's principal asset ruined by allowing the redevelopment of the landward end.

Next to the entrance is the former Rock House & Royal Pier Hotel which was completed in 1869 soon after the opening of the pier. It was designed in a vaguely Gothic manner by Hans Price, who also designed the toll house and entrance gates and railings to the pier. Although a sun lounge was added in the 1930s and the building, having been misused as a night club for some years, is in poor repair, the Royal Pier Hotel is an integral part of the original vision which makes Clevedon special. It is now listed grade II.

Last year Prowting Homes applied to demolish the hotel and replace it by a large block of retirement flats designed by W.S. Atkins, architects, of Bristol. This was turned down by the local planning committee. The developers then bounced back with a revised design in a lumpen neo-Victorian style which retained, as a sop to conservation, a chunk of the original façade.

Despite opposition of the Victorian Society and English Heritage as well as the Clevedon Pier & Heritage Trust, this was approved by Clevedon town council. North Somerset council was then all set to let the development go ahead, believing restoration of the existing building as an hotel was economically unviable.

In April, however, English Heritage told the council that it "vigorously objects to the demolition of this building. We reiterate that this is the centrepiece of the Clevedon Conservation Area and the efforts previously made to save the Pier make these damaging proposals especially pertinent. We have fundamental objections to a scheme in such a sensitive position which is clearly at variance with Central Government advice."

That advice, in the form of the circular PPG 15, is that a listed building must be put on the open market to test its economic viability before consent for demolition can be given. In fact, there is at least one local individual interested in taking on the hotel but he has not been allowed to see the interior by the official receiver (the last owner went bust). The Clevedon Pier & Heritage Trust is also willing to try to restore the hotel, but if listed building consent and planning permission are granted, its value will rise beyond its means.

Despite the unambiguous statement from English Heritage and regardless of local opinion, North Somerset council has decided to allow demolition. The case will probably – surely? – be called in for public inquiry, which can only be a further waste of time and money. The council's decision makes a mockery of all the efforts to save and restore Clevedon Pier: what on earth is North Somerset council doing?

THE saga of Clevedon provides more proof of the foolishness of giving further power to most local authorities to determine the fate of historic buildings and precious environments. And it begs the question of why many councillors are such narrow, blinkered, unimaginative and commercially-minded mediocrities.

We might cite again West Dorset district council (Eyes passim), which has decided to allow 59 flats to be built on the site of the former police station in St Andrew's Road, Bridport.

The police station is a decent red brick building put up in 1941. As part of "rationalisation" it was sold, together with four houses, to Messrs McCarthy & Stone, developers, of Bournemouth for £650,000. That does not seem a high price for a prominent site that can accommodate so many new flats, but there we are.

As the Bridport News reported earlier this month, Cllr Coatsworth thought the new flats "look like a lot of chicken coops. They do not do justice to the area." Cllr Wild, chairman of Bridport's regeneration sub-committee, found them "rather depressing. I don't think the demolition of this building is justified." Cllr Draper, chairman of planning, was also critical; while Cllr Meech warned that "it is Bridport's history that is being lost."

And then councillors voted for the demolition of the police station and to approve the flats, with minor amendments. Why?

'Piloti'

I-SPY

S. France

Submitted by Daniel Hooper.

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE orchestra for the pop concert at Buckingham Palace comprised students from the Royal Academy of Music, whose services were acquired by the BBC in return for a £5,000 donation to the RAM. In this way Greg Dyke and friends achieved the musical equivalent of sending small boys up chimneys.

It might be thought such a donation is generous and the event quite properly gave youngsters a sense of the big time. But the truth is the BBC just wanted to reduce the bill and it knew how much it would have cost if it had had to fork out for a professional band. The residuals for the audio, video and TV rights of such a big-selling event would have been worth a thousand pounds or more to any member of a professional orchestra, which is why students were given the job.

The Musicians' Union is of course furious. But it doesn't feel able to complain because it doesn't want students being paid.

"If you've been here thirty years, you must have resisted a lot of change in that time"

THROUGHOUT the jubilee one figure has been conspicuously absent: the elusive Master of the Queens Music, Malcolm Williamson.

The jubilee commission for the anthem at St Paul's went not to Williamson but to John Rutter. The classical concert at Buckingham Palace featured not one note of his work. And if you scoured the programmes of attendant services, events and ceremonies, you wouldn't find his name either. He wasn't there.

But then he's never there. Since his appointment 27 years ago, Williamson has been the least visible, audible or distinguished holder of the job in modern history. He provides no music. He supplies no leadership. He does nothing for the profession. And these days he doesn't even get invited to professional gatherings thanks to a past habit of turning up while appearing tired and emotional.

The only time in living memory the Master made news was when he was quoted likening the success of Andrew Lloyd Webber to the spread of AIDS: a comment that backfired so badly it earned our sole surviving musical peer a good deal of unmerited sympathy. Williamson, one should note, has never even merited a knighthood: an honour that usually comes as a matter of course to MQMs.

The jubilee, though, was the last straw and musicians have begun to lobby seriously for Williamson to be replaced – not least, in the columns of the trade magazine *Classical Music*, where a current letter asks for publication of a complete list of the composer's Masterly work since his appointment. It won't take up much space.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

They were just like us, Matt– best of mates, but rivals. You're Matisse the supreme stylist, I'm more the visionary Picasso.
TATE MODERN
Matisse-Picasso
NOW BOOKING FOR AUGUST "DON'T MISS
No—With our shared African influences, I see myself as Picasso. You're definitely the petit bourgeois Matisse.
I'm Picasso! He was sexier, and made more money!
Exactly—like me!
Oh yeah?
Yeah!

Letters

Finn end of the wedge

Sir,

No congratulations for the MMR issue.

But you REALLY should have not reproduced within it the article from your previous edition describing the "MMRV study in progress in Sheffield".

I wrote to you at the time pointing out that this study never existed and you published an (inconspicuous) retraction, so this was pretty careless, assuming it was a lapse of memory.

I strongly recommend you talk to someone who knows some immunology or epidemiology and who hasn't got an axe to grind before pursuing this crusade further. I've no objection to more research into this idea – although I suspect it will not support Wakefield's thesis when it's done – but this needs to be done against the background that – beyond any doubt at all – illness due to mumps, illness and deaths due to measles and deaths and cases of multiple chronic handicap (brain, eyes, bones, heart) due to congenital rubella syndrome are going to occur as a result of people refusing MMR altogether or in preference for single antigens – all on the basis of an unproven hypothesis.

It's easy to make play out of vested interests – but to suggest that (nearly) all doctors are perverted by multinational drug companies is as absurd as suggesting that (nearly) all journalists will sell their souls for improved circulation figures and a spot of career enhancing notoriety.

We – and you – need to be constantly vigilant that our actions are in the best interests of the children of this country and their future health. There's a real risk that your MMR special edition will blight many young lives and ameliorate none – you should take great care of exercising such power.

Regards,
ADAM FINN,
Prof of Paediatrics, Institute of Child Health, Bristol.

Causality and effect

Sir,

The Department of Health claims in its statement that "demonstrating the presence in specific tissues [of MMR derived measles virus] would not prove causality [between MMR and bowel disease/autism]". The DoH must know, as does any remotely competent scientist, that proving a causal link is infinitely more difficult than showing a correlative relationship. What is baffling is why the department believes that until definitive proof of causality is obtained we should all continue to take the dubious gamble that there is no causal link.

It is interesting to contrast the current approach with that during the BSE crisis. During that unfortunate episode initial denials of a link between BSE and variant CJD were ripped up well before anything approaching "definitive proof" of causality was obtained. Why did the government not allow us all to continue munching beef offal right up to the point at which there was definitive proof of a causal relationship? Could it be that ministers were shit scared of a mass outbreak of variant CJD, a disease about which very little was known? By contrast it is now abundantly clear that even if there is a link between MMR and autism only a very few unfortunates will be affected. Clearly the government believes these victims' pain is a price worth paying.

Why on earth can the Government not just admit that there may be a small risk of adverse effects from MMR and proceed to an honest debate about whether this risk is one that should be taken?

Yours faithfully,
ROGER FRANKLIN,
Trinity College, Oxford.

Jubilate jubilee

Sir,

Your article on EMI (1056), while wholly accurate, should in fairness have mentioned that all profits from the sale of the Jubilee CD will go to the Jubilee Trust charity.

TIM DEAN,
Zurich.

EMI oh my

Sir,

Your report on EMI releasing the palace concert CD while also re-releasing the Sex Pistols' anti-royal rant "God Save the Queen" only captures half the irony of the situation. Way back in the punk days, the original release of this song attracted so much opposition that EMI sacked the Sex Pistols and dropped the record. The anarchist ditty was gleefully picked up by Virgin, who made a lot of money from it.

Johnny Rotten, incensed by EMI's treatment of the group, wrote another vitriolic little number attacking their former record company. This song, "EMI", appeared on the Pistols' album "Never Mind the Bollocks". A few years later Beardie Branson sold Virgin Records to EMI. The result is that EMI is now celebrating the 25th anniversary of punk by re-releasing the Sex Pistols' recordings, giving yet more exposure to a fierce attack on its own integrity. Some people really will do anything for money.

Regards,
ROD PARKES,
Hong Kong.

"I won't have you wasting your youth on homework! Get down the Snooker Club or kick a football about!"

Clutching at Straw

Sir,

As a boring civil servant, I turn avidly every fortnight to read the titillating news in HP Sauce. Always well-informed and ahead of the news.

So imagine my surprise on reading, in the piece about Whitehall infiltration by private companies (Eye 1056) about "Home Secretary Jack Straw".

Something you know he doesn't?

Yours etc,
CHRIS AUSTIN,
Twickenham.

Consign-ed to history

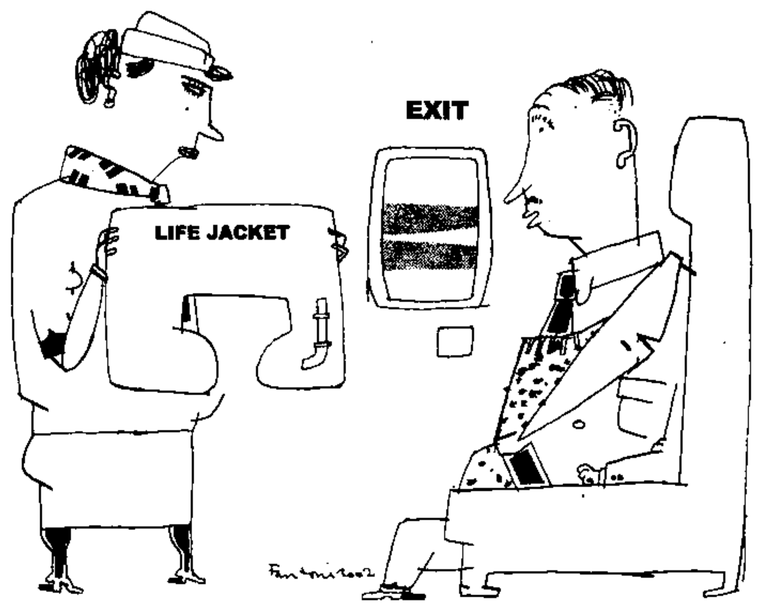
Sir,

Re: Consignia logo. Here is one what I have designed. Please make exclusive use of it. I would be flattered. I don't know about you, but it certainly made my mate Steve laugh and he's usually quite morose.

Yours,
RUFUS LYLE (EX-POSTMAN),
Via e-mail.

Gonsignia

Scenes You Seldom See (13)



"Thank you – this is most informative"

Porn crackers

Sir,

Have the repressed middle-classes at your esteemed organ got some sort of peculiar hang-up over pornography? Given your endless obsession with "Dirty" Desmond and his naughty mag hi-jinx, one can't help feeling you doth protest too much...

So what if "Dirty" Desmond has spent a career helping the hot-wristed keep themselves amused at night? His little emporium has provided more fun that the Blair administration has ever given us.

It's just a shame Des has chosen to get involved with this more sordid institution himself and forsake his former, cleaner career.

Yours,
SIMON LEWIS,
Via e-mail.

Willcocks-up

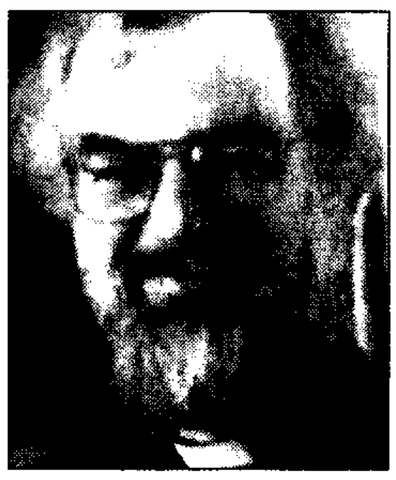
Sir,

Re Media News, 1056. Oh dear. Your parliamentary correspondent is not on the ball. Lt Gen Sir Michael Wilcocks (or Willcocks, depending on which rag one subscribes to) is not Serjeant-at-Arms at the Palace of Westminster. He holds the position of Black Rod and is therefore responsible for order and discipline in the House of Lords and not the Commons.

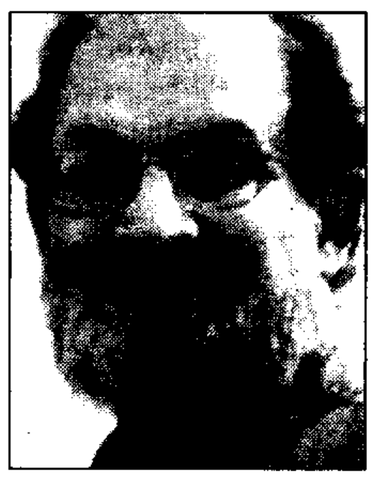
Both episodes, to which you refer, fall outside his "bailiwick" – unless his job description has been re-written, in which case I think we should be told.

Yours sincerely,
BOB (EX KNACKER) WOOD,
Former deputy head of security, Palace of Westminster.

Lookalike



Rushdie



Next archbishop

Sir,

I enclose a picture of the next Archbishop of Canterbury and one of Rowan Williams as well.

Yours,
PETER SMITH,
Newport, S. Wales.

Own goal by Square Eyes

Sir,

Where to begin dissecting the rubbish written by Square Eyes on the World Cup Coverage?

Put any half dozen real football fans together on a discussion on the game and you will have disagreement. Why should that not be reflected in studio post mortems? If there is ANY complaint about match analysis it's that it is TOO "pally-wally" – witness the piss-poor coverage on ITV, where poor bemused Jimmy Floyd Hasslbaink is left playing the straight man to all the laughing clowns around him.

As for Paul Gascoigne being in the studio for "expert analysis" and then proceeding to say he'd never even heard of Senegal – that just about sums ITV's coverage up.

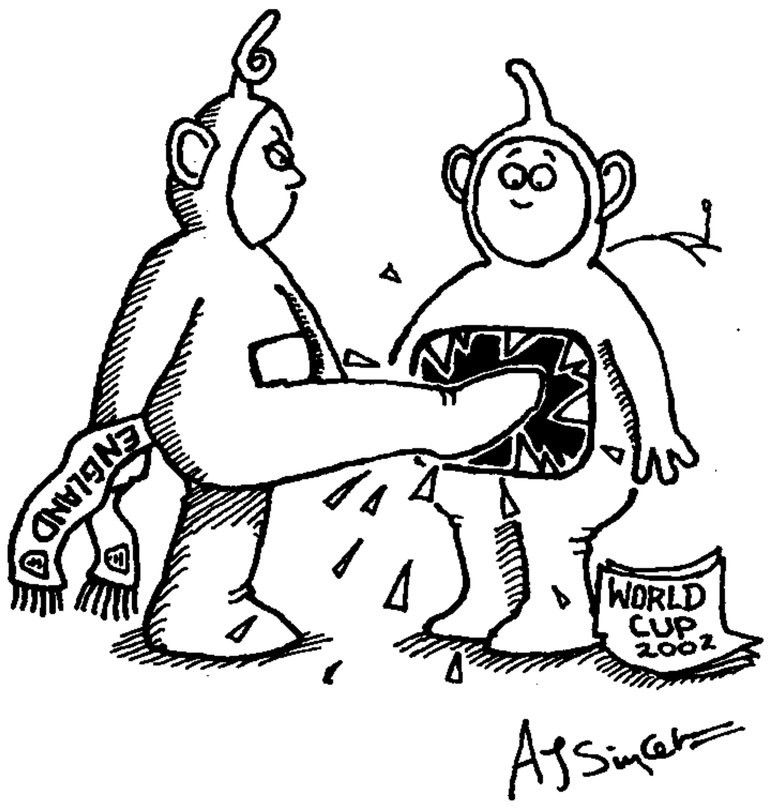
More worrying is the accusation of "sectarian Celtic hatred" between Alan Hansen and Martin O'Neill. Where is the evidence for this? Square Eyes claims to trace this back to BBC's 1998 coverage. I watched the coverage in question and failed to spot any "sectarian Celtic hatred" – and being a native of Glasgow I can spot that at 1,000 yards. There were plenty of occasions when O'Neill told Hansen he was talking rot, but sectarian?

As for the criticism of Gary Lineker, I find this hard to comprehend. He isn't Des Lynam and that is a blessing on his part – the bland, obsequious, baseless pro-English statements Des revels in are lacking. Why? Because as Square Eyes says, Lineker knows what it takes for a team to get to the semi-finals of a World Cup and refuses to gush undeserving praise, a trait Des has made his own.

In all BBC's coverage of the finals has been far superior to ITV's – maybe it's just a wee bit too early in the morning for Square Eyes? Keep up the good work and slide tackle Square Eyes.

FRED McGHEE,

Via e-mail.



Sir,

I am rarely moved to write about anything, what with apathy and youth being against me. I had to write, however, to ask you to please stop commenting on football related matters. Whilst everything else written is as near as gold as can be, you are really shown up when talking about football. I've turned an apathetic eye so far, but Square Eyes's piece about BBC and ITV coverage of the World Cup finally tipped the balance and prompted me into action. I can't believe he/she seriously considered ITV's cliché-ridden-punditry-filled-stupid-commentator-employing coverage as superior; and what's more, they choose the worst possible camera angles and filters for highlights packages, which, as in the appalling Premiership, makes viewing the goals impossible.

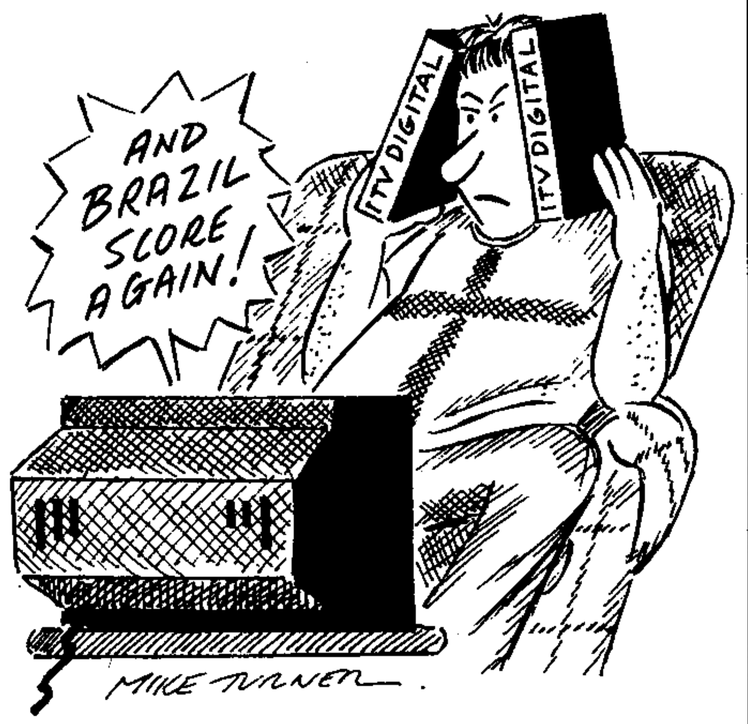
You should though be pleased that you've motivated one disaffected youth.

Still a superb read though.

ALEX GALE,

London.

101 Uses For An ITV Digital Box
No.4: Earmuffs



Sir,

Square Eyes' review of the World Cup TV coverage was considered, insightful and did not contain any basic factual errors about football. Am I correct to assume his P45 is in the post?

Best regards,
COLIN BORLAND,

Edinburgh.

Not fair!

Sir,

Don't you think it's unfair that I should be misquoted in Pseuds Corner when all I was doing anyway was – oh, forget it.

JAN MORRIS,

Via e-mail.

● *Jan Morris was quoting Alain de Botton so she's right. It was unfair. Ed.*

Lookalike

Peel

Padre

Sir,

I was struck by the remarkable resemblance between the blessed Padre Pio and the almost eponymous John Peel of Radio 4 etc. Is there any relationship? I think we should be told.

DAVID J. ELLIS,

Burnley.

Latin lover

Sir,

Emboldened by your printing my last piece of pedantry, I point out that the Rev. Mr Blair is still having trouble with his Latin. It should be salvete (plural) Darling and Boateng and vale (singular) Byers. Additionally: though justice for cartoon snails is not always easy to obtain in the divorce court, she wouldn't get his house, as snails are hermaphrodite.

Yours,
WALTER HARRIS,

Via e-mail.

Splitting hairs

Sir,

In "Bonded Labourers" (Literary Review, Eye 1055) you referred to royal biographer and warden of Goldsmiths College University of London, Ben Pimlott as a "beard scratcher". I feel obliged to point out to you that the esteemed Professor Pimlott does not, in fact, have a beard. He does, however, have a vote of no confidence against him from the unionised members of his staff, so perhaps his shaving habits have been slipping of late.

Yours truly,
MR COOL,

Address unknown.

WorldCupballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Some time in the 90 minutes they are going to have to win the game."
TREVOR BROOKING, BBC1
(Anon)

"The Belgians will play like their fellow Scandinavians: Denmark and Sweden."
ANDY TOWNSEND, ITV
(Michel Eedy)

"Football is much harder if you don't have the ball."
SVEN-GORAN ERIKSSON
(Brian Clifford)

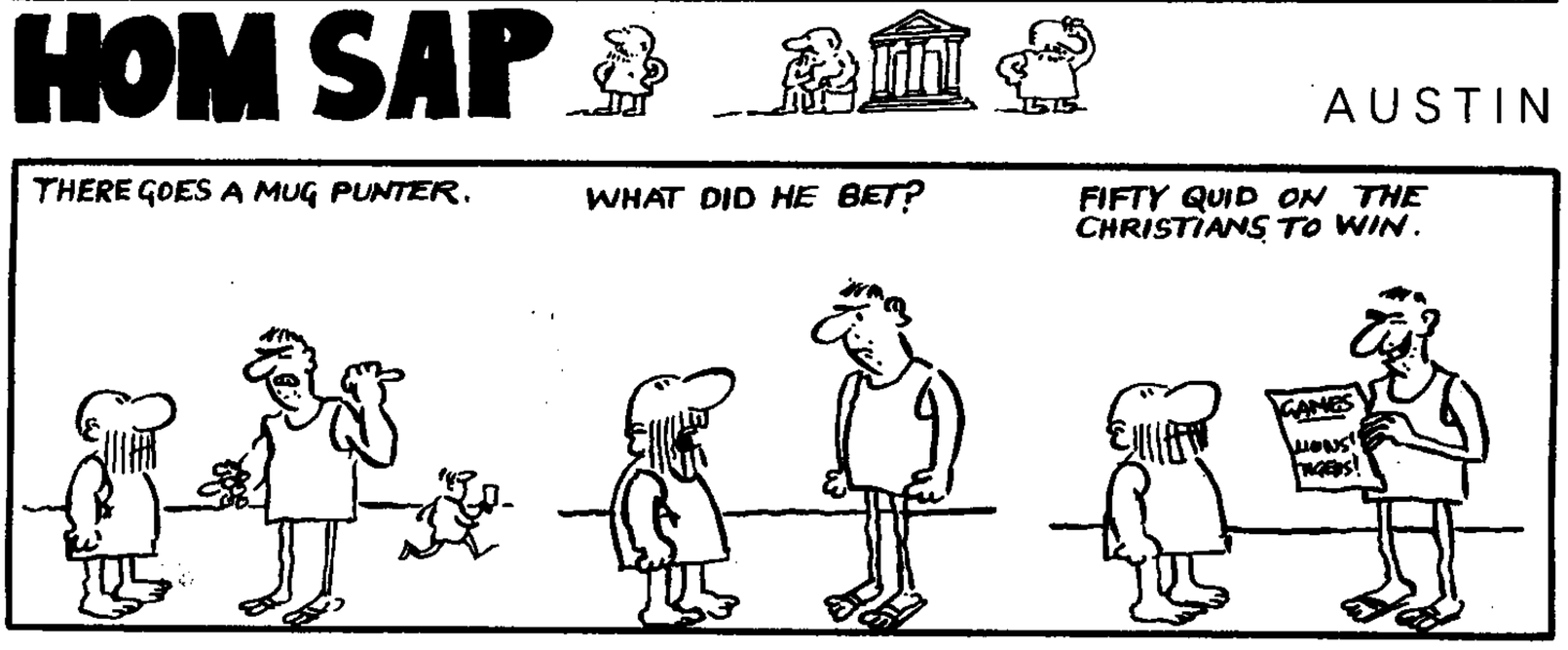
"The underdogs will start favourites for this match."
CRAIG BROWN, Radio 5 Live
(John Vear)

"You know when I say that things happen in matches? Well, it just happened there..."
RON ATKINSON, ITV
(Emil Fortune)

"It was a game of two halves, literally."
CHRIS POWELL, Radio 5 Live
(Ian Heath)

"Such a positive move by Uruguay – bringing 2 players off and putting 2 players on."
JOHN HELM
(Alexander Browning)

Lineker: *Do you think he [Rio Ferdinand] is a natural defender?*
O'Leary: *He could grow into one.*
BBC1
(A. Cooper)



Letter from **Senegal**
from Our Own Correspondent

AS THE leaders of the world's richest nations prepared to gather for the G8 summit in Kananaskis, Canada, this month, on their agenda was how to save our miserable, long forgotten continent. But many of us now believe the only thing worse than not being talked about... is to be talked about.

When Tony Blair wound up his triumphal tour of West Africa earlier this year, the man who said only in October that Africa was "a scar on the conscience of the world" was now the radiant prophet of better times: "a consensus for change"; "moving forward together"; "here to listen and to learn"; "making a difference"; etc.

Keen to show he was up to speed, Blair made glowing references to Nepad, the New Partnership for African Development, our home-grown African blueprint for salvation. The latest ambitious rescue plan for Africa, Nepad is the main reference for anyone who wants to sound informed about where the continent is heading, and that includes the five African heads of state identified as its architects. They have dubbed it "a holistic, comprehensive, integrated strategic framework for the socio-economic development of Africa".

This claptrap (*"well-considered analysis", shurely? Ed.)* is contagious. Nepad converts include Canada's minister for international development Susan Whelan, who told a conference in Montreal: "Here is a vision. The eradication of poverty in Africa. Equal rights and status for African women and men. Peace. Security. Democracy. Good governance. Active participation in the world economy. It's all in here." Indeed it is, along with a demand for $64bn in direct foreign investment to help get us moving. Even Tony Blair is likely to balk at that sort of request, but kindly Canada has already promised Can$500m.

If the G8 leaders want clarification on what they are getting into, they should ask our 76-year-old president Abdoulaye Wade, lawyer, economist and sage who spent much of his adult life leading the Senegalese opposition to defeat after defeat until finally winning an election two years ago.

Wade was in at the beginning of Nepad. His own Omega Plan for Africa was in competition with a rival Millennium Partnership for Africa's Recovery Programme (MAP), supposedly the brainchild of South African president Thabo Mbeki and Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo. The two plans were tactfully merged into Nepad with the core proposals fleshed out by a team of economists.

Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria were then drafted as Nepad champions, leaving us with the beacons for all our hopes some of the most useless, narrow-minded, self-seeking, arrogant and undemocratic leaders Africa has ever produced.

Our president has been the most high profile advocate. We recently hosted a major investors' conference in Dakar, trying to drum up private sector interest in advance of G8. While US corporate types referred to "a moment in history" and "a turning point for Africa", in private they admitted they didn't have a clue what was on offer.

Obasanjo took sideswipes at cowardly investors and over-critical human rights campaigners. Old guard African leaders like Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya and Omar Bongo of Gabon, like Obasanjo and the rest, more agents of our misfortune than our redeemers, suggested Nepad might come unstuck when it got down to "peer review mechanisms". Thabo Mbeki didn't even bother to show up.

Despite the fanfare and pious pledges, Nepad is probably headed for the bin. The chequebooks may be waved at Kananaskis, but the G8 interest will be fleeting and for the record. Nepad's proponents don't care much for each other and, with the possible exception of Wade, have domestic problems so vast and intractable they leave little time for such grand schemes.

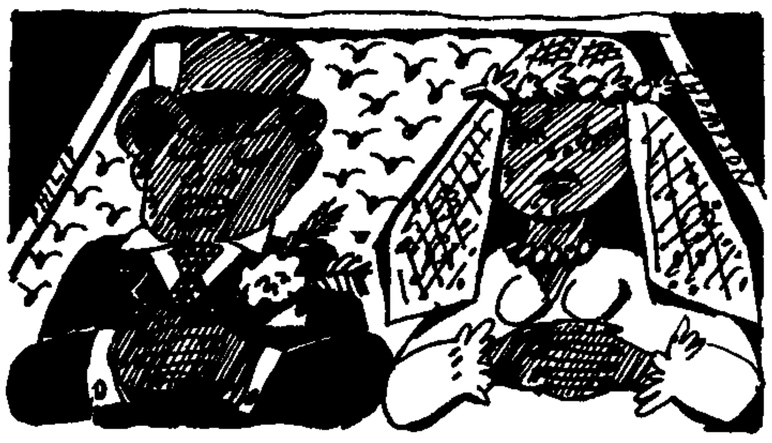
But it's not all doom: now the bandwagon is rolling, government functionaries, aid workers and other well-meaning types can look forward to a beanfest of summits, workshops and pledges. At least the football gave us something to cheer.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

O "This is all most unfortunate," a spokesman for the Nigerian police force admitted to reporters in Onitsha, "especially as this should be a time of celebration. The fact is, the four policemen were only here at all because they had been hired to provide security for the wedding by the groom, Francis Okonkwo, Or rather, I should say, by the late Francis Okonkwo.

"As is customary after the service, the officers took out their guns and fired shots into the air as a mark of respect to the new couple. But, possibly due to the influence of alcohol, their aim was slightly berserk, and they very much appear to have accidentally shot and killed Mr Okonkwo and his wife, along with the organist, another man who was representing the father-in-law, and someone who hadn't even been

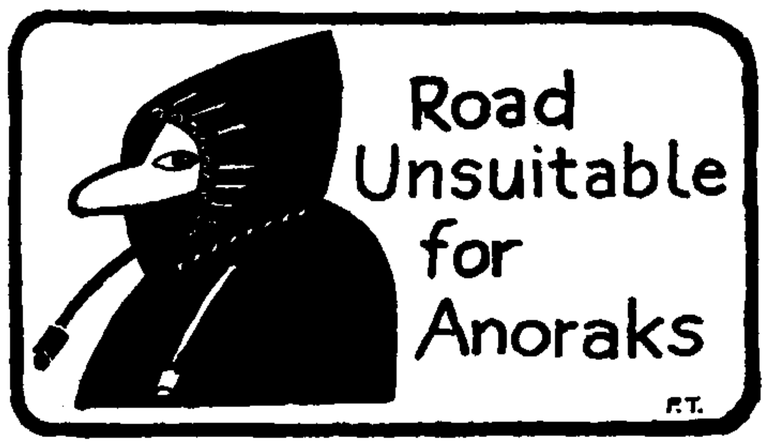


invited. Of course we take this matter very seriously, and if we can find out which of the four policemen fired the fatal shots, take it from me, this will be the last wedding he attends for some time. From now on, it will be traffic duty only for him." *(African Times, 10/5/02. Spotter: Jonathan Fryer)*

— O —

O *"This is the first-ever in-depth research into the health risks of anorak wearing," Professor Philip Murray announced at a press conference at Birmingham City Hospital, "and the results are remarkable. Campaigns to reduce road traffic accidents have hitherto paid little attention to the subject, but our findings prove what many people have long suspected. Put simply, the wearing of anoraks can be dangerous, and injurious to health.*

"Our researchers measured the binocular visual field of healthy volunteers while they were wearing four different styles of anorak. Most wearers habitually pull the hood over their head, and our ophthalmologists discovered that, with the hood up, the field of vision is more than halved. The biggest danger comes when an anorak wearer tries to cross the road, because their vision is severely impaired, and they simply



cannot see as well as other people. Our results prove beyond doubt that people need to be far more careful in their choice of headgear. And quite apart from that, they look ridiculous." (Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, 2002; 95: 192-3. Spotter: Zoe McDougall)

— O —

O "Roland is a good son, and the youngest of my seven children," Mary Magsipoclaspipoc told reporters on the steps of Bacolod City Hospital, "but he has been depressed since his wife moved to Manila to work as a housemaid. To console himself, he indulged himself by reading the Bible, and has memorised most of it. I ***think*** his act was triggered by the book of Matthew, 18:8."

Mrs Magsipoclaspipoc was speaking about her son, who had been rushed unconscious to the hospital, after slicing off his penis with a machete. "His Uncle found Roland Magsipoclaspipoc this morning in his room, covered in blood and with a portion of his penis missing, so we brought him here. After the bleeding had stopped and he had regained consciousness, he explained that he had no regrets about cutting off his penis, because it was driving him to sin. He quoted Matthew 18:8 – 'if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away' – and said he very much wants to be nailed to a mango tree, though not to a coconut tree, because they are highly dangerous and may lead to concussion. He also advised other people to remove nude photos from their walls so that small children will not become sex maniacs later. In my opinion, that is good advice."

A hospital spokesman later added that "his penis showed several wounds, indicating that he had hacked at it several times before cutting it off. We have stitched it up and reconstructed the penis, though it is now only 10% of its original length, so I dare say his wife won't be best pleased, when she gets back from Manila." *(The Philippine Star, 8/6/02. Spotter: Peter Derbyshire)*

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

In place of our normal letter from the Vicar, this week's newsletter is reprinting a transcript of the first "Open To Question" session held on the vicarage lawn and open to all parishioners who had been given tickets by Mr Campbell.

Rev. Blair: A very warm welcome to you on this lovely summer afternoon, when I know that many of you would prefer to be thinking about who's going to win tomorrow's Big Match!

If any of you guys would like to take your jackets off, please do. I'm certainly going to take off mine, as things are likely to become pretty hot over the next hour or so! Now, who's going to kick off with a really tough question?

Q: Why are you holding this "Question and Answer" session, Vicar?

A: Good question! Look, we've heard a lot about how your vicar is not being "open" about what he's doing in the parish. And what could be more open than the vicarage garden? I'm here, in front of all you guys, to give you a really straight answer to any question you guys want to ask.

Q: Is it right that the vicar's wife should go round sounding off about things which are not her responsibility?

A: Could I have the next question, please?

Q: Is this an end to spin from the vicarage?

A: Well, actually there never has been any spin from the vicarage. There has only been a perception of spin. I mean, spin is in the eye of the beholder. As it says in the Good Book, "Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not, neither do they spin." And, as far as I'm concerned, guys, what's good enough for the Good Book is good enough for your vicar.

Q: Is it true that you're going to reappoint Mr Mandelson as Churchwarden?

A: Next question.

Q: Vicar, is it true that you've done a fantastic job over the past five years?

A: Thank you, Alastair, and that seems to be a good note to end on! We'll be serving coffee and biscuits in the vicarage, and we've got some particularly fine homemade cakes bought by Mrs Jowell from Tesco! Thank you, guys, for making this occasion such a great success!

MR BLUNKETT — A CLARIFICATION

When Mr Blunkett of our Neighbourhood Watch said that everyone on our local newspaper, the St Albion's Clarion, was "stark, staring bonkers" and should be "locked up in a looney bin for life with rats gnawing at their bones while they starve to death," he was merely indulging in a light-hearted joke and he says that anyone who suggests to the contrary is certifiably insane and should be shot.

To Remember In Your Prayers

● Mr Livingstone, who is having such bad luck these days with girlfriends, walls and alcohol! One cannot imagine the saintly Mr Dobson behaving in such a manner, can one? Perhaps in future people will have rather more faith in the Vicar's judgement, and will not be so quick to criticise me for excommunicating him! T.B.

Here and There

The vicar's wife was guest of honour at a *Bring & Buy* sale held in the Church Hall in aid of Palestinian refugees, opened by the Queen of Jordan. Mrs Blair said that she was equally sorry for both sides and hoped that the conflict would soon be resolved in a sensible and peaceful way, without any further tragic loss of life. The *Bring & Buy* was a great success, raising £7.58p, mainly through the sale of home-made bombs (surely 'jams'? A.C.)

LIFE AND DEATH

The Vicar was "devastated" by the terrible news from Japan and offers his heartfelt commiserations to all those suffering this awful loss. It has been particularly hard for the Vicar because he was hoping to welcome the St Albion team home and give a big party at the vicarage, but this may no longer be popular (surely "possible"?). A.C.

The Vicar Writes:

We had been hoping to include in this week's Newsletter a message of support from our Treasurer Mr Brown. But, regrettably, at time of going to press we still have not heard from him. I am sure Gordon is very busy, but I would like to remind him that, as a senior member of the parish team, he shares responsibility for all the things we are doing. You can't just take credit in the good times, and then by keeping quiet in the bad times hope that you will end up being made the Vicar! T.B.

A Message from our Good Friend the Rev. Dubya Bush of the Church of the Latter-Day Morons in the USA

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, and especially my very good friend the Rev. Tim Blair and his good lady, Shirley! I want y'all to join me on mah crusade to rid the world of evil, for once and for all. And where do we find that evil? Well, I will tell you, mah friends! In I-raq, wherever that may be. A figure with horns on his head and a big moustache, by way of name, SATAN Hussein. It's all there in the *Book of Reservations*. So that's why I put Mr Satan on notice. I am going to creep up on him and shoot him dead like the dirty rattlesnake he is. And I'm not going to give no warning, so he won't know what's coming! So, watch out, Satan. You think you're fast, but I'm faster. And if I go for my gun first, that's only because I'm shooting in self-defence. God bless y'all and God bless America.

Parish Postbag

Dear Vicar,

Could I be the first to say how sorry I am to hear that you are having such a horrid time? Everyone is being thoroughly beastly to you, only because they're jealous of what a marvellous job you're doing. I know only too well the envy that attaches to someone who is so obviously head and shoulders above everyone around him, particularly when they are as second-rate and untrustworthy as Alastair Ca.

Yours sincerely,
P. Mandelson,
Hinduja Mansions, Robinson Crescent.

ENGLAND FANS SHAME THE NATION

by **E.I. Addio**, Our Man In The Sushi Bar With A Bowl Of Rice And A Glass Of Water

HUNDREDS of new-look English fans rampaged through the streets of Seoul yesterday, chanting "Hats off to Brazil, they were the better team on the day."

The fans were reported to be "sober out of their minds" and went out of their way not to break any windows or urinate in anyone's doorway.

Said one shocked Korean, "We are amazed that this sort of behaviour goes on. We had been looking forward to spraying them with CS gas and locking them up in our prisons for hundreds of years."

Said a spokesman for the English fans, "We are unrepentant. All the other teams in this tournament are truly terrific. We have really enjoyed the football and feel much better for not having drunk much for the last month."

ENGLAND TEAM RETURN TO HEROES' WELCOME

by **E.U. Addio**, Our Man In Seville With The Orange And The Sombrero

CAPTAIN Tony Blair returned in triumph yesterday after his heroic defeat at the hands of all the top European teams.

Blair, however, was defiant.

"The boys did very well, considering that most of us are unfit to hold office."

He then blamed the Europeans for cheating. "There is no way that we would have lost the argument unless it was all fixed behind the scenes."

Late score

England **0**

French Asylum seekers **500,000**

Late News

OUR BOYS FLY BACK TO HEROES' WELCOME

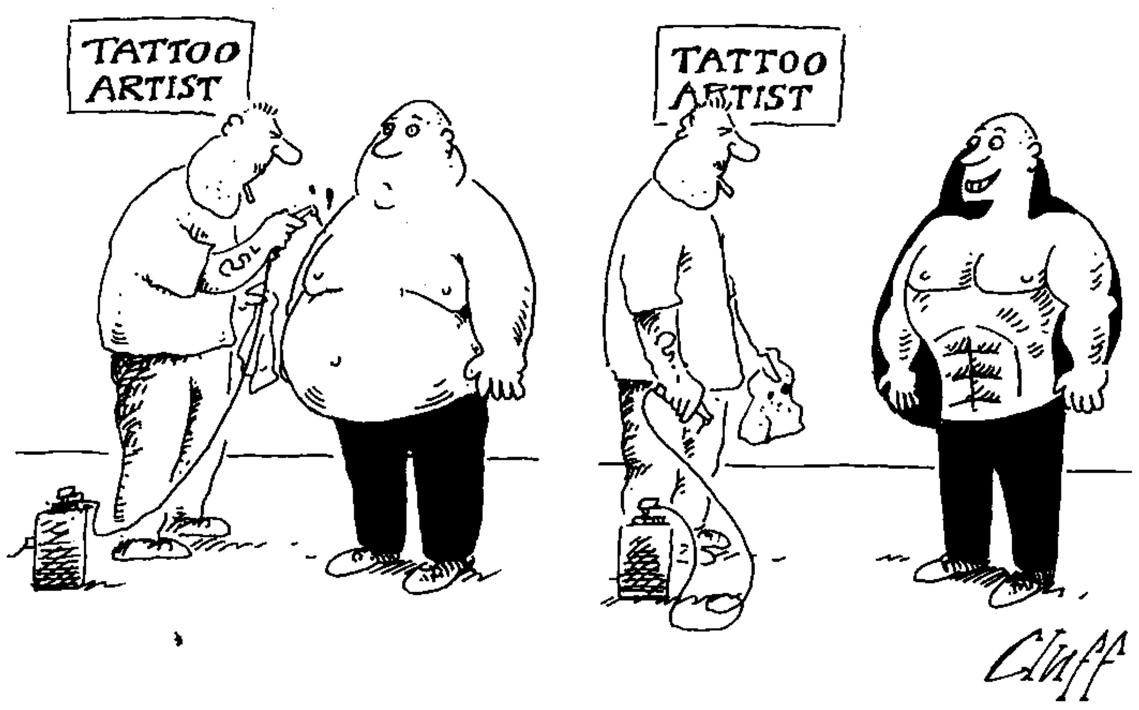
THE English team of Royal Marines flew into Heathrow last night to be met by a crowd of no one.

Said skipper Brigadier Lane, "Our boys put up a terrific fight. The Taliban lads were very devious and decided not to turn up for the match. But we far out-performed them in every department, occupying their territory for most of the game and firing lots of shots at nobody."

Late score

England **0** Taliban **0**

Man of the Match, the elusive No. 9 shirt **O. bin Laden.**



"Blasted children! Stop arguing over that needle... share it!"

SPOT THE BUNG

■ Can you see where the bribe has gone?

Put a cross on the official you think most likely to have taken a wad to fix the game. Send it at once to Lord Gnome, enclosing a cheque for £500,000, and you too can win this competition.

A Cab Driver Writes

Every week a taxi driver is asked to comment on an issue of topical importance.

THIS WEEK: **Stan Bummer** (Cab No. 7426385) on England's failure to reach the semi-finals of the World Cup.

...Honestly, guv, there's no way you can blame Seaman, any way you look at it it was a freak goal, I mean, after all, he's kept us in more games than I've driven people to Heathrow via Stansted ha ha ha... but really when you see the replay you've got to question what he was doing off his line, it's a schoolboy error basically, what was he thinking about? Pony-tailed git – and then crying about it – I ask you. I think he should be strung up – on the crossbar? Or maybe shoot himself – except he'd probably miss. It's all his fault we lost. What a bastard!

I 'ad that Gazza in the back of the cab. Threw up all over the seats.

'WE ARE ALL RACISTS' Says Sir David Calvert-Twitte

by Our Home Affairs Staff **Ray Cyst**

THE HEAD of Britain's new-look Crown Prosecution Service told reporters today, "We are all racists now, particularly in my department. I see a white man and I immediately assume he is a bigot. It is not something I'm proud of but it is just the way I'm made. I tend to pick on white people and blame them when things go wrong – which they do all the time when I'm in charge. If only I was a black man then I'd be much better at my job."

Sir David's views were given on Radio 4's popular interview programme *On The Make* with John Humphrys.

WIMBLEDON 2002

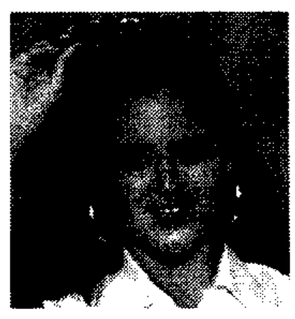
SIX TO DROOL OVER

(Surely watch? Ed.)

Titzi Longlegova, 22-year-old lovely from the land of Rumpymania.

Krikey Pornakova, 28-year-old super-lovely from the land of Sexlovakia.

Nika Elastica, 16-year-old Lolita from the land of Pornographia. *(That's quite enough. Ed)*



On other pages: Tennis

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

- **My Husband – What a Bastard** by Elizabeth Jane Amis
- **My Father – What a Bastard** by Penny Junor
- **My Bastard – What a Father** by Dominic Carman
- **My Bastard – What a Bastard** by Elizabeth Hurley

(That's enough bastards. Ed)

Lord Desmond of Filth, for services to the Asian community

Sir Keith Vaz, for services to the sleaze industry

Sir Ronald Biggs, for services to crime

Dame Myra Hindley, for services to the newspaper industry

JUBILEE HONOURS LIST IN FULL

OBEs cont'd. from p. 94

for services to waste disposal in the West Midlands; Michael Horovitz, for services to the photocopying industry in Soho; MCPC Jobsworth, for services to the private finance initiative, Redditch; Ken Beard, for services to the Milton Keynes Jazz Festival; Defra Binduja, Ministry of Culture, Media and Sport, for services to Asian netball; Mrs Siobhan Wong, for services to Irish-Chinese charities.

VOLE (Victorian Order of Loyalty to the Empire)

Crispin Gaytrouser, former Comptroller of the Backstairs to Her Majesty the Queen Mother; Horace Campfellow, Keeper of Her Majesty the Queen Mother's Jigsaws; Hon. Teddy Lushington-Lush, Custodian-in-Chief of the Drinks Cabinet to HRH the Princess Margaret; JPS Benson-Rothman, purveyor of tobacco requisites to Her Late Royal Highness; Mrs Camilla Parker-Knowles, Mistress of the Royal Bedchamber, for services to HRH the Prince of Wales.

Overseas Honours

Falkland Islands

OBE Reg Sheepshagger, Penguin Warden at the Goose Green Nature Reserve; Mrs Peggy Kelp, proprietor of the Sir Max Hastings Memorial Tea Rooms, Port Stanley.

Gibraltar

MBE Winston di Gomez, manager of Apes R Us Postcard Shop; Alfonso Massingberd, features editor of *What's On In Gibraltar.*

Ascension Island

PDV Crash, for services to air traffic control.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Call My Bluff, long-running BBC quiz programme

So. Farewell then
Call My Bluff.
Finally, they have called
Yours.

E.J. Thribb

Thribb. Is it:

a) *a South American monkey?*

b) *a type of pewter bowl used in Anglo-Saxon burial ceremonies?*

c) *a poet and eulogist whose new selection of verses* A Funeral Garland For Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother *has just been published?*

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

LUCIAN FREUD

As the world's greatest living painter, would you choose spoons as a suitable subject for one of your paintings?

I'm afraid I don't give interviews.

NEXT WEEK: Sir Jonathan Miller on – *"Me And My Knighthood."*

First Reading 1 Kings 3 (vv 3 - 14)

Read by the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Tony Blair, MP

King Solomon is commended for seeking the wisdom from above

Durham Cathedral, Evensong and celebration of the Golden Jubilee

WOMAN DROPS 'SUICIDE' BOMBSHELL

by Our Political Staff **Barbara Amiel Sharon**

A WOMAN yesterday was severely injured when she walked into a Palestinian charity event crowded with journalists and opened her mouth.

"The whole thing blew up in her face," said a shocked onlooker. "One minute everyone was nodding in agreement with what she was saying and the next there was mayhem as all the hacks ran to phone their newspapers with a scoop.

"You have to feel sympathy with Mrs Blair, though," he continued. "She is hopeless and has no future."

The Daily Hurleygraph Friday, June 28, 2002

'Yes, I'm The Father' Admits Hurley Lover

by Our Home Affairs Staff
STEVE BINGO

THE MAN at the centre of the Liz Hurley baby row has finally accepted his responsibilities.

Charles Moore, the middle-aged playboy editor of the Daily Telegraph, has conceded that he is indeed the father of all the stories about Liz Hurley's baby in his newspaper.

His well-known infatuation with the model turned actress dates back several years, but he has recently been denying that the baby articles were his fault.

But now after independent tests on the Daily Telegraph confirmed that there could be no doubt about the paternity of the baby features, Moore has promised to support the story for the next twenty years.

Said a friend of Liz Hurley's, "This is marvellous news for Liz. And also for Charles. It must be worth 300,000 words a week."

Pictures in full p. 2-94

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN?

ITV bosses are eager to speak to anyone who has seen this man. When Des was last seen by anyone he was sitting comfortably in a BBC TV studio hosting major football events. Since then he has mysteriously disappeared and ITV bosses are extremely worried that they should never have approached him armed with a large cheque and *(cont. p. 94)*

LUCIAN FREUD
TATE BRITAIN
GREATEST LIVING PAINTER
CONCESSIONS FOR OAP PAINTERS
NO SMOKING IN HERE SIR!
JEFF BIN IN?
ALSO PORTRAITS OF PAINTERS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRUCE BERNARD
CAN I SEE YOUR TICKET PLEASE MADAME?
NOTICE HOW THE EYES FOLLOW YOU AROUND THE ROOM
IT'S PAINTING BY MEMBERS
I HOPE GIRLS WILL STILL FANCY ME WHEN I'M EIGHTY!
MUCH MORE
PRADA
TATE BRITAIN
FREUD MUGS £4.50

Daily Mail
FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2002

PENSIONS WORTHLESS AS STOCK MARKET COLLAPSE HERALDS HOUSE PRICE DISASTER

'Time to end it all now'

MIDDLE-CLASS newspaper readers might as well top themselves at once, according to a series of reports published every day in the Daily Mail.

by Daily Mail Staff
Clare Monger

The only reason to stay alive, according to experts, is to see whether the Mail runs an even more depressing report the next day, suggesting that it is only a matter of time before economic ruin strikes every man, woman and child in Britain, reducing them to eating their pets and begging for loose change from asylum seekers who

(cont. p 94)

COMMENT

How Evil Blair has Tarnished the Queen Mother's funeral

IT should have been a golden memory as we looked back on an occasion which united the nation in grief and pride. Instead, the funeral has become tainted by endless headlines and stories about Downing Street's memos and emails to Black Rod. How could we have let a glorious celebration of British patriotism descend into dreary and trivial political mud slinging? Whoever is responsible should be ashamed of themselves – and that means **you,** Mr Editor. *(Surely "Mr Blair"? Ed.)*

On Other Pages
How Blair tried to muscle his way onto the front page by being Prime Minister.

Why Sir Paul Should Do The Decent Thing And Divorce Heather At Once

Writes GLENDA LEE-POTTY

IT IS only too obvious that Sir Paul McCartney, the world's best-loved composer, has fallen for the oldest trick in the book.

He has become the victim of a ruthless gold-digger who is out to kill him.

It is always the same, when a much-loved and saintly wife and mother tragically passes on, leaving her husband defenceless against the ruthless wiles of a self-appointed wife No. 2 .

Drivel

That is why Paul's children did everything they could to prevent their dear father walking up the aisle to a certain death.

But who is to know that they themselves are now safe?

After Paul swallows his fatal dose of rat poison, how long will it be before the same fate befalls his innocent kiddies?

But it is not too late. It is time for Macca to act now to save himself and his loved ones from this Lucretia Borgia of our times.

Garbage

He must phone the police immediately and tell them all he knows about the plot to bump off the entire McCartney dynasty, so that the murderess can lay her evil hands on one of the world's greatest fortunes.

It will be hard for him to turn in the wife to whom he has been married for only a few days, knowing that she will face death on the gallows.

But he must act now to save himself, his family and civilisation.

© Lynda Lee-Poison, Dacretash Productions 2002

Where Were You When You Heard The News That Black Rod's Killer Memo Had Meant That Downing Street Had To Withdraw Its Complaint To The PCC?

Boris Johnson of the Daily Telegraph

"I was writing an article for the Daily Telegraph, explaining how brilliant the Spectator had been to print Obore's amazing scoop."

Peter Obore of the Spectator

"I was on TV at the time, explaining to Jon Snow how brilliant I had been to break the world's greatest ever scoop."

Black Rod, General Sir Michael Willcockitupforblair

"I was just putting on my black tights in the Lords gents, thinking maybe I'd overdone it a bit by telling that johnny from the Spectator what a ghastly little shit Blair is."

Paul Dacre of the Daily Mail

"I was in my office reading the Spectator when I saw this piece by Peter Obore. I brilliantly decided that no one reads the Spec, so I could run it on the front page of the Mail and everyone would think how brilliant we were."

The Queen

"I was just working out the arrangements for Mr Blair's funeral, and wondering where to put Mr Brown when..."

"Brother Nathaniel, burning a witch is a serious business"

"There's a couple here who only have £200,000 to spend"

COUGH ON CRIME, COUGH ON THE CAUSES OF CRIME

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

IN A dazzling initiative which has left the political world gasping, the leader of the Conservative Party Mr Iain Duncan Cough has decided to remain silent on the dramatic rise in crime figures since the Blair government took power.

This astute move follows Mr Cough's equally dramatic decision to say nothing at all about the sensational Black Rod affair which has rocked the government to its foundations.

As reporters yesterday besieged Mr Cough's country house, Strepsil Manor, begging him to say something about anything at all, the wily Tory leader issued a non-statement to say that he had nothing to say.

Floreat Covonia

Political insiders were last night unanimous in their admiration for Mr Cough's bold Silence Initiative, which has left the Labour Party stunned.

Said one senior Tory, "Iain Cough is growing in stature by the day, with every speech he fails to make."

● Those Cough Silences In Full **p. 0**

THE PRIME MINISTER VS. BLACK ROD
A Constitutional Historian Writes

THE CURRENT row between the Prime Minister and Conrad Black Rod, *writes Peter O'Bore*, marks a serious breach in the constitutional role of these two historic offices.

The Prime Minister is the elected representative of the people. Conrad Black Rod is the self-appointed owner of the Daily Telegraph Group.

The Prime Minister is a Labour MP. Conrad Black Rod is a Tory peer.

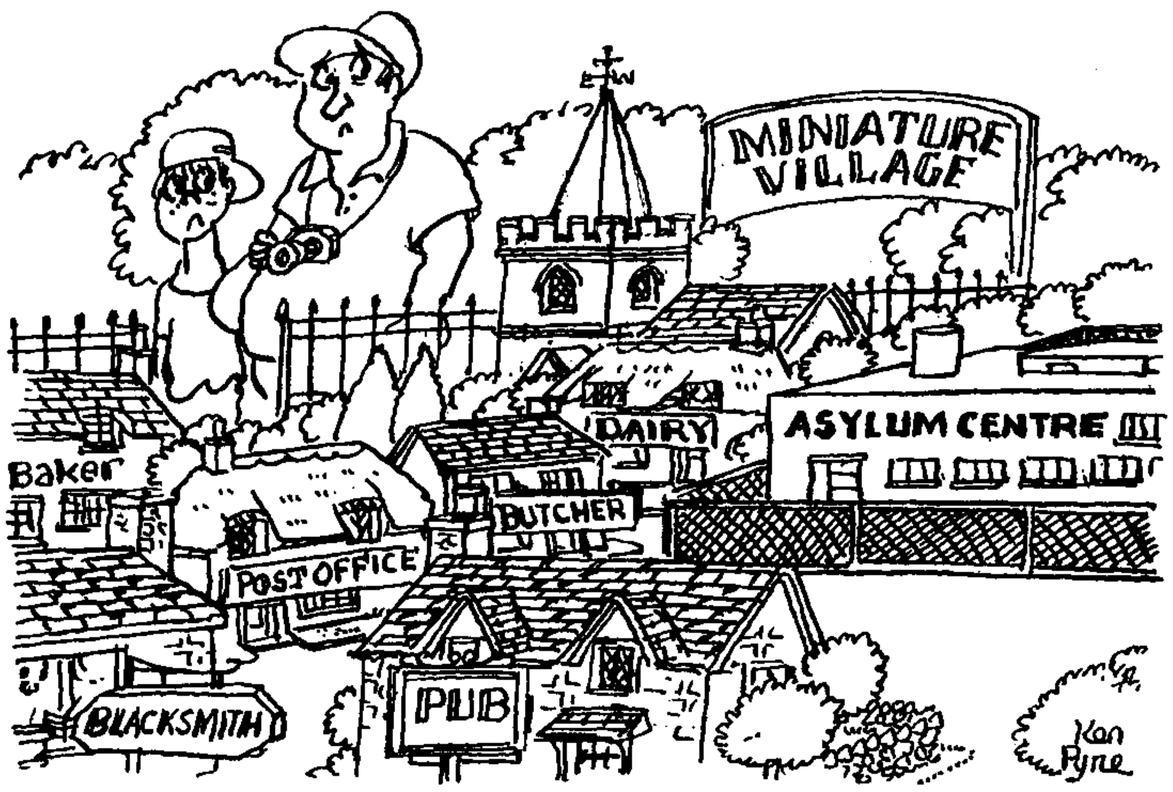
At the opening of Parliament it is Conrad Black Rod's official duty to bash the Prime Minister over the head with his ceremonial newspaper.

Normally this is an accepted part of political tradition. However, in this case, relations have soured since the death of the Conservative Party. During the funeral Mr Blair was accused by Conrad Black Rod of "muscling in" and trying to use the death of an elderly institution in order to promote himself.

The Prime Minister denied this, saying that he was acting according to an ancient precedent dating back to 1979 when Mrs Thatcher attended the death of the old Labour Party and insisted on dominating the event.

The conflict between the two men shows no sign of abating and Conrad Black Rod has let it be known that he will use all the powers of his office (*The Spectator, Telegraph*, etc) to continue the struggle.

The Prime Minister has meanwhile accused Conrad Black Rod of acting above and beyond his historic role of running stories about how marvellous Iain Duncan Smith is *(cont. p. 94)*



WEST LONDON SQUATTERS DIG IN

'They Can't Kick Us Out' Says Man With Beard

by Our Kensington Palace Correspondent **Grace N. Favour**

A MIDDLE-AGED couple who for years have 'squatted' in one of London's most prestigious housing complexes were last night breathing defiance at suggestions that they should move out.

"Why should people like us be picked on by society," said foreign-born 'traveller' Princess Michael of Kent. "We haven't done anything – why should we leave?"

Right Pair of Kents

"She's right," said her bearded partner, known only to fellow-squatters as 'Prince Michael of Kent'. "We've been living here peaceably for years, not giving trouble to anyone – and yet suddenly the authorities want to chuck us out.

"We've got nowhere to go," he complained bitterly, "except a large house in Gloucestershire.

"They used to call this a free country, in the years when we could stay here for free," said the embittered squatters' spokesman.

Getting The Pushy

The couple are known to supplement their state benefits by hiring themselves out to commercial concerns as look-alikes for the Czar Nicholas II of Russia and Miss Jerry Hall, the model and former partner of Sir Michael Shagger.

POLLY FILLER

ON HER NEW NOVEL

WHEN I wrote the first Polly Filler column I had no idea that within such a short time it would be a nationwide success, the subject of countless dinner party conversations, and of course a best-selling book and forthcoming film.

But maybe I should have known. From day one, grateful women have written to me saying, "Polly, you speak for working mothers everywhere. You tell it like it is. Your childcare problems are our childcare problems. Your useless partner is our useless partner. Your attempts to combine a fantastically successful career with being a supermum are just like ours – although obviously we are not as good at it as you!!"

Clearly, I had tapped in to a national nerve. I had disovered the essential truth about women that no one had dared to tell before. They have jobs and children as well!!

The rest is history. And now, as my new novel hits the street, I still find the working women of Britain want to know the answer to one simple question: "Where did you find your nanny?" *(Surely "Where did you find the time to write this brilliant analysis of contemporary women's issues?" Ed.)*

OF COURSE, it's not as easy as it looks. Try telling your energetic and very bright toddler that you can't read him a bedtime story because you've got to finish the chapter in which your heroine can't read her toddler a bedtime story because she's working late!!! Don't talk to me about guilt!!

But I know it's all been worth it when I receive the sackfuls of letters and hordes of e-mails thanking me for my unique insights and telling me how marvellous I am.

But remember, girls. We're *all* marvellous, not *just* me. And that's the whole point.

Polly Filler's new novel "How Do You Fill That Column?" is available directly from www.remainders.com.uk

Late News

E-MAIL SECRECY LATEST

DAVID BLUNKETT has decided to shelve indefinitely proposals that would have given the public far more access to private Government phone calls and e-mails.

"As most of them involve plans to smear rail crash survivors, bully Royal officials or bury bad news, the longer they remain totally secret the better."

MOBILE PHONE HEALTH ALERT

A NEW report has warned of the health risks to some users caused by mobile phones.

"We're most concerned about Vodafone shareholders being rung up and told the news that Sir Christopher Gent paid himself £2.4 million last year as the share price plummeted," said one worried scientist. "They're almost sure to have a heart attack."

HAIRDRESSER
Req'd for Mayfair Hair Salon, Beverley Road. Perm job for suitable applicant.
Advertisement, Hull Daily Mail

the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOD

WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE YOUR MAIN MEMORY OF THE 2002 WORLD CUP?
OH, WITHOUT DOUBT, THE JAPANESE PEOPLE...
WE CAN OFFER YOU £2·5 MILLION OVER 3 YEARS
£1 MILLION TO USE YOUR FACE IN AN ADVERT
TOSHIBA
TOYOTA
£2 MILLION FOR THREE WORDS
SONY

DIARY

ANNE ROBINSON

Sit up straight, class, and answer me this one: which sassy lady has the highest-rated TV quiz show among the all-important 19-49 age group in the US of A?

Right first time: moi.

I am, to coin a phrase, the strongest link. Okay, if you really want to know what I earned last year I will tell you – with some reluctance! It was a seven figure sum – and a lot closer, I might add, to $3m than to $2m. Alright, it was $2,765,402 to be exact, and if you don't believe me, go ask my top international Manhattan-based accountant.

Yes, I own a stately pile in Gloucestershire, with its own 40-foot kitchen and top-of-the-range designer cooker, a Henry Moore in the solarium, a Lucien Freud in the luxury fitted bathroom (with bidet and whirlpool bath) and an indoor swimming pool with full sauna facilities to match. I count top stars like Roger Moore, Michael Winner, Roseanne Barr and top chef Keith Floyd among my closest friends – and I don't blink an eyelid when I walk into Bergdorf Goodman in Manhattan and emerge twenty minutes later, $15,000 the poorer.

For all her screaming and shouting and getting her proverbial knickers in a twist, that's something Germaine Greer can't claim. Incidentally, Germaine, a visit to a top hair salon might not go amiss – remind me to give you the number of mine, he's a sweety (though – sorry, love – I suspect he'd run a mile from you and your bird's nest!).

HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE: In the very same I was approached by the BBC to host its flagship consumer programme Watchdog, Germaine signed on for her umpteenth year as some sort of lecturer at Warwick University at a salary of zilch. So much for the Feminist Movement!

Believe me, it's important to maintain a highly developed sense of humour when you're at the top of the tree and living one of the most enviable – and envied! – lifestyles on Planet Earth. Thank God, and I'm not necessarily saying He exists (don't get me started, but I don't think Jesus, for all his undoubted do–gooding, ever had his own top–rated quiz show!!) I've always been able to see the funny side of running a multi–million pound transatlantic lifestyle and living the kind of life other women, out of laziness, stupidity or general unattractiveness, only ever dream about.

Only the other day, I was walking through Manhattan with my veritable poppet of a daughter, spending squillions on designer clothes and just about surviving being recognised and admired by the world and his wife – but even then I was still able to see the funny side!

"You're the bestest Mum in the whole wide world," remarked The Daughter, who loves me to bits, " – and fabulously glamorous with it!"

"Touche!" I quipped back, quick as a flash.

So who really am I? Who's the REAL Annie? That's the question on everyone's lips. The highest-paid woman journalist in Britain – or the biggest TV celebrity America's ever seen? Or, to put it another way – will the real Anne Robinson please stand up?!?!

These days, I'm probably best known for my wickedly funny repartee on the top-rated "Weakest Link". It's an open secret that some of my barbed gems have already entered all the major quotation books:

"So, Gary, call yourself a plumber? You've really plumbed the depths this time, haven't you?!!!!!!"

"So, Susan, you're not very clever after all!!!!!"

"Have you ever heard the phrase, 'you're utterly useless', then, Simon?"

Classic put-downs!! But it gets on my proverbial wick that everyone in the world thinks I'm the wickedest wit on telly and the friend of the famous (for my sins!) when for most of my professional life I was better known as the highest-paid columnist in Fleet Street.

My highly-paid columns on The Daily Mirror are still talked about by all those who admire a true professional. To be a successful columnist you need the quickest brain in town, boundless energy – and the sheer bloody nerve to think the unthinkable! And judging by the stacks of letters I received from my avid readers, bless 'em, I scored top marks on all counts.

On HM the Queen: "She shouldn't wear pink. Frankly, it doesn't suit her" (8/3/79).

On the Pope's visit to Britain: "And what, may one ask, was he wearing? Has the Poncy Pontiff really never heard of designer jeans and a good old M&S plain white T-shirt?" (29/5/82).

On Nelson Mandela: "Let me stick my neck out and say this, loud and clear. The guy's a total hero. He should never have been put in jail for all that time, no matter what he got up to. But, in future, I'd advise him against those bright floral shirts. Believe me, Nelson, love, in the fight against apartheid, a suit and tie can be every bit as effective." (13/2/90).

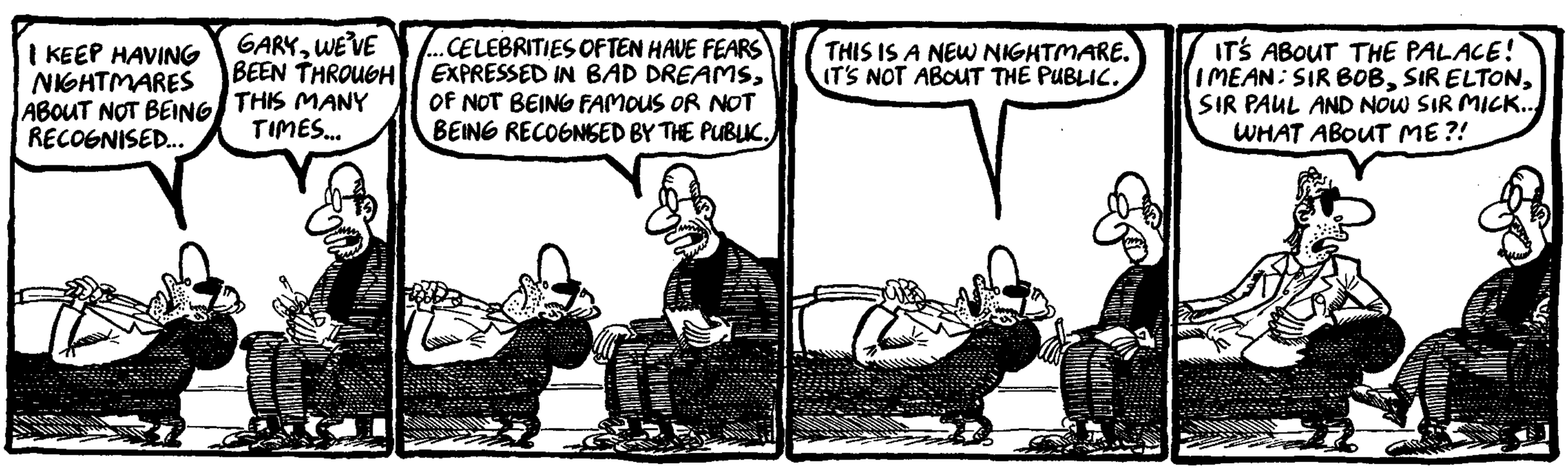
My rise in television has been literally meteoric – just like the mega-bucks column on my bank statements! (But whisper that not to Germaine – she's very keen on the money, you know. And, while I'm on the subject, Mother Teresa was never half so well paid as she made herself out to be – but don't get me started!).

Having established "Points of View" as the biggest must-see on British TV – complete with my legendary trademark "cheerio wink"! – the Beeb then offered me highly-paid job fronting Watchdog. Oh, yes, please! I said – and everyone in the consumer and travel industries must have wished I hadn't!

"Always Dream Your Dreams" is one of my mother's old maxims – and it's advice I pass on at no cost. At considerable expense (but then if there's one person who can afford it, it's me!) I've had a series of Annie's Maxims embroidered in gold threat onto silk cushions for my ballroom couches. The other maxims include "Charity Begins at Luxury Home", "Believe Me, Love, I've Come A Long Way Since I Used to Wake Up in A Pool of My Own Vomit In A Bed I Did Not Recognise" and "Manners Don't Maketh Money". But my personal fave? "And I Leave With... Everything". Goodbye!

As told to

CRAIG BROWN


I KEEP HAVING NIGHTMARES ABOUT NOT BEING RECOGNISED...
GARY, WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS MANY TIMES...
...CELEBRITIES OFTEN HAVE FEARS EXPRESSED IN BAD DREAMS, OF NOT BEING FAMOUS OR NOT BEING RECOGNISED BY THE PUBLIC.
THIS IS A NEW NIGHTMARE. IT'S NOT ABOUT THE PUBLIC.
IT'S ABOUT THE PALACE! I MEAN: SIR BOB, SIR ELTON, SIR PAUL AND NOW SIR MICK.. WHAT ABOUT ME?!

Literary Review

Self-service game

Serious
John McEnroe
(Little, Brown, £17.99)

REVIEWING a biography of Norman Mailer, Martin Amis established the difference between British and American literary culture by Manhattanising the lives of our leading writers: "Anthony Powell stabs Lady Violet – near-fatally. . . A.N. Wilson goes five rounds with drinking-buddy Frank Bruno. None of this sounds terribly likely, does it?"

Similarly, we can be fairly sure that Tim Henman's memoirs, when they come, will be short on accounts of the violent and drug-fuelled years with his movie-star first wife before leaving her for his new rock-star partner who gradually gets him off the booze, drugs, tantrums and fistfights. Admittedly, though, *Timbo – My Story* is unlikely to need page-space for 77 singles titles and the seven Grand Slams.

It's a sign of the new age of sports books that John McEnroe's autobiography would not now be thought salesworthy merely on account of his legendary achievements in tennis. These days a jock-biog needs something else to make it sell to newspaper serialisation editors and the general reader.

Ian Botham's book had cricket plus sex; Sir Alex Ferguson offered football plus "bungs" and working-class struggle. *Serious* by John McEnroe gives a bit of Borg and Connors for the buffs, but has lots of Tatum O'Neill, Patty Smyth and sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll for the types who only go to Wimbledon for the corporate hospitality.

The basic problem with sports stars is that they write more books than they read. Jimmy Greaves is due to publish his fifth autobiography this autumn. Still aged only 43, McEnroe has already been the subject of two exhaustive biographies: *A Rage For Perfection* (1982) and *Taming The Talent* (1990).

Conscious of this, *Serious* – with its heavy-handed title adapted from his old umpire-insult – strenuously pushes the line that a new John McEnroe book is needed because we've got a new John McEnroe. This, in effect, is Big Mac's Happy Meal: the tale of man who has conquered his demons to emerge as good husband, super-dad (to his six children, "the best thing that ever happened to me") and a respected tennis commentator on television. This sub-text of "redemption" has made into an American best-seller and Book Of The Week on Radio 4 a work which is really a bog-standard sports biog.

Signalling that Mac is now serving with new balls, the book begins on the morning of September 11th, 2001. McEnroe had no direct or unusual involvement in the terrible events – he took the kids to school before switching on the TV and gasping – but the publishers and ghost-writer James Kaplan seem to intend a parallel between the day when America had to face up to geo-political reality and a former tennis player's triumph over his hot temper. Getting "serious", you see.

Given that this book must have been well in progress before 9/11 – and that the list of author's Acknowledgements ends with a nod to "the New York City fire-fighters. The real heroes" – it's surely time to start a roll of shame of publishers hitching a ride on the mortuary vans streaming from the World Trade Center.

After that shameless first game, the book swings between publicity-grabbing confessional – "The first time Tatum and I made love, we were high, and it was terrible" – and tennis anecdote. The problem with the latter, as most commentators and reporters prove each summer, is that tennis is a notoriously hard game to describe. This is because it moves so fast – a game can be won in four serves – that character and action can't be analysed as they can in football, cricket or golf.

For example, the 18-16 tie-break in the fourth set of Borg-McEnroe at Wimbledon in 1980 was the greatest visual spectacle tennis has ever offered. Here, though, is Big Mac on it in his memoirs: "The tiebreaker kept going back and forth, back and forth, both of us hitting lots of winners, neither of us able to put it away." Like much in this book, it makes you want not to read on but to put on a tennis video.

Another weakness of the tennis sections is that Mac is unnaturally obsessed with the Davis Cup, the sport's least significant trophy, which takes a great individual game and tries to pretend it's a team effort. The only point of these sections seems to be to further confirm his patriotism after September 11th.

You always know a book's in trouble when it starts resorting to lists to fill up pages at the end and we duly get "McEnroe's Top Ten Recommendations For Improving Tennis In The 21st Century" and "My Top 25 Rock-'n'-Roll Moments: A Personal Outtake Reel." The first includes a "return to wooden rackets". Now there would be a better use of trees.

The Führer, The Jackal, The Professor and his Publishers

■ NICK Cohen's *Observer* column on 16 June was essentially a lengthy advertisement for *Telling Lies About Hitler*, in which Professor Richard Evans demolishes David Irving's revisionist "history" of the Holocaust, and a furious attack on publishers who had allegedly been too cowardly to issue the book. But whoever briefed Cohen has been telling a few porky-pies of their own.

Evans, professor of modern history at Cambridge, was the main expert witness for the defence in the libel suit between David Irving and the Penguin author Deborah Lipstadt a couple of years ago. He assembled a vast dossier listing all the distortions and misquotations in Irving's books, which persuaded the judge to find in favour of Penguin. After the trial, Penguin considered issuing Evans's dossier as a book, assuming that as it had already paid him £80,000 for the research he wouldn't require a hefty advance as well. But Evans wanted more, and sold the rights to Heinemann. When Irving threatened to sue, however, Heinemann bosses lost their nerve and pulped it.

"At the time, Heinemann's collapse before Irving's bombastic assault didn't seem to matter too much," Cohen wrote. "Granta Books, an independent house, was

"Apparently we're all filled up with rubbish"

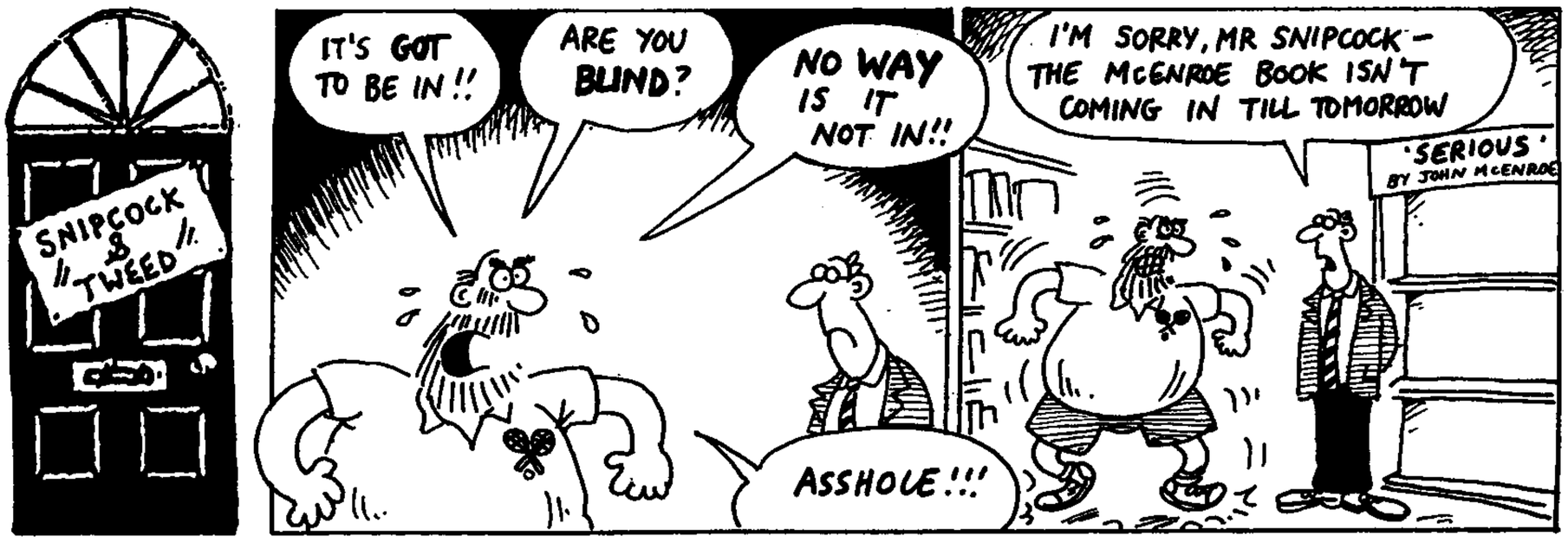
saluted in the liberal press for standing up for freedom and buying *Telling Lies About Hitler*." But then Granta tried to bully Evans into signing a four-book deal. "He wasn't keen to commit himself to churning out manuscripts until he retired — and the money wasn't great. There was obviously a bad falling-out and Evans refused to spend a decade writing for Granta. *Telling Lies About Hitler* was at the typesetters. Granta pulled it. Evans found for the second time that a comforter of neo-Nazis and a demonstrable liar had more clout in literary London than the professor of modern history at Cambridge." Fortunately, the left-wing publisher Verso had now stepped in and saved the day.

If all this were true, it might justify Cohen's ferocious assault on Granta's editors for "abandoning their principles" and betraying their commitment to "freedom of speech, thought and publication". Apart from the fact that Verso is publishing the book, however, it is pure fantasy. What caused the "falling-out" was not Granta's terror of Irving and his lawyers (in fact, it had already published a book on the Irving trial, by the journalist Don Guttenplan), nor its cruel desire to keep a poor starving professor on the treadmill until he died. It was, in fact, the greed and duplicity of Cohen's hero, Richard Evans.

What happened was this. When Heinemann pulled out, Evans spoke to the Granta editor Neil Belton. Though not over-enthusiastic at the idea of publishing *Telling Lies About Hitler*, since Granta had already bought the Guttenplan book, Belton agreed to do it. Evans then mentioned two other semi-academic studies he wanted to write: far from having a multi-book deal foisted on him, it was he who proposed it. Belton suggested another idea — a biography of Karl Marx — and Evans was happy to add this to the list.

As well he might have been. Granta, a small independent publisher, was proposing to pay the professor its biggest advance ever. For the Marx biography alone, his fee would be £130,000.

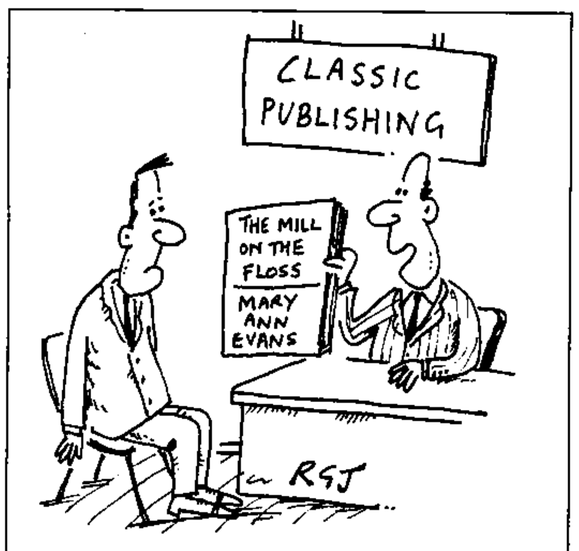
Since Evans said he was keen to sign, *Telling Lies About Hitler* was sent to the typesetters last spring for publication in September. But then, in the words of one of those involved, "all of a sudden he went very quiet". Calls went unreturned, and still he hadn't actually signed the contract. Evans's agent, Peter Robinson of Curtis Brown, found his author equally elusive. Still, Evans did turn up at the Granta


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
IT'S GOT TO BE IN!!
ARE YOU BLIND?
NO WAY IS IT NOT IN!!
ASSHOLE!!!
I'M SORRY, MR SNIPCOCK – THE McENROE BOOK ISN'T COMING IN TILL TOMORROW
'SERIOUS' BY JOHN McENROE

summer party in July and said how much he was looking forward to the book's publication.

Just three days later, the notorious super-agent Andrew "The Jackal" Wylie faxed a letter to Granta announcing that he now represented Evans — and that the four-book deal was off. Charmingly, Evans hadn't even bothered to tell Robinson that he was being sacked: the first the agent knew about it was when Granta rang up in some puzzlement after receiving the fax.

Seeing the huge sums earned by Simon Schama, David Starkey and Niall Ferguson, Evans had apparently decided that he too should be a millionaire. Wylie, famous for luring authors such as Salman Rushdie and Martin Amis with the promise of riches, duly negotiated a deal worth almost £1m with Penguin for a two-volume history of Nazi Germany. But even the Jackal couldn't persuade Penguin to buy the rights in *Telling Lies About Hitler* at the same time, so Evans told Granta's editors they still had a moral obligation — although he had never signed a contract and had double-crossed them. They thought otherwise. "We'd had enough of Evans," one said. "He'd behaved very badly and dishonestly."



"We've had to change George Eliot's name... There's just no market for books written by men"

Evans's parting shot was a warning to Granta executive Gail Lynch: "You'll have egg on your face if you don't publish."

Nick Cohen's *Observer* piece is the fulfilment of this threat. While lambasting Granta, which behaved in good faith throughout, Cohen didn't refer to the role of the Jackal. Nor did he say that Penguin turned down *Telling Lies About Hitler*, or that Verso eventually agreed to take it only if Evans received no advance. Could it be that a certain valiant-for-truth Cambridge professor forgot to mention these inconvenient details?

The mystery of Orwell's millions

GEORGE ORWELL seems to be a permanent fixture on the British publishing scene. Even now, a year before the centenary celebrations are due to commence – cue more biographies and TV drama docs – the newspaper review sections have been bristling with accounts of Hilary Spurling's revisionist portrait of his second wife Sonia (*The Girl from the Fiction Department*, Hamish Hamilton £9.99).

Sonia died in 1980, more or less destitute. According to Spurling, her lawyer maintained that what was left would barely cover the cost of the funeral. Throughout her 30-year guardianship of Orwell's memory – he died in January 1950 – the financial side of his estate was handled by a company called George Orwell Productions, fronted by Jack Harrison (who died some years ago) of the accounting firm Harrison, Son, Hill & Co. As Sonia's business manager, and with sole control of the money, Harrison paid her a monthly salary (£750 in the late 1970s) and made small disbursements to members of her family and to Richard Blair, the adopted child of Orwell's first marriage.

Meanwhile, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* had become two of the best-selling novels of the post-war era. It was apparently a trip to America, where she saw copies piled up in mounds in the local bookstores, that encouraged Sonia to begin the legal action against Harrison which ended with her death.

The Orwell scholars who followed in her wake have had to be exceedingly cautious in what they said about all this. Michael Shelden, for example, whose *Orwell: The Authorised Biography* appeared in 1991, received a letter from Harrison, Son, Hill & Co while he was at work on the book warning of trouble if he so much as mentioned the firm's name.

Naturally enough, *The Girl from the Fiction Department* does not openly accuse Orwell's financial manager of fraud – no doubt Hamish Hamilton's lawyers went through it with a fine tooth-comb – but the implication is there on every page of the section devoted to Sonia's declining years.

There is a particularly poignant passage about Sonia having to write to Harrison even to raise the £150 needed to buy a warm overcoat.

Wasn't it odd, Robert Harris wondered in the *Daily Telegraph*, that the widow of a man whose books have sold 40 million copies in the half-century since his death should die almost penniless. Geoffrey Wheatcroft struck a similar note in a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*. All those translation rights. All those film options. What *did* happen to it all, eh?

To the puzzled onlooker, uninstructed in the evasion and concealment required in any public discussion of the Orwell millions, all this must seem very strange. What, however, can be deduced from Hilary Spurling's meaningful juxtapositions of Orwell's royalties (£100,000 a year from Secker & Warburg in the 1970s) and his widow's penury? Basically Ms Spurling and a great many other people seem to believe that Sonia Orwell was the object of a major fraud by Jack Harrison. What does the Orwell Estate, currently administered by the literary agents A.M. Heath, think about this? It would be nice to know.

Warballs

"The Starbucks coffee chain has removed a poster from more than 3,000 cafes in the US and Canada because its picture of a dragonfly hovering beside two big cups of iced tea reminded some customers of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre... 'As a responsible company, we want to ensure that nobody is offended,' its spokeswoman said, adding that no customers had complained directly to the company about the advertising campaign."

— *Guardian.*

How Sept 11 affected plan for bus shelters

— *Chichester Observer*

Pseuds Corner

The first one she had, which she rented from Prince, had a washer-dryer, too. She herself designed the interior for the next one, which will be delivered before the end of the year. It will be decked out in kente cloth – the hand-woven fabric of Ghana's Ashanti region that has become an aesthetic signifier of black America's African heritage.

MAYA ANGELOU's tour bus, as described in the *Guardian*

His two-room bachelor pad in Soho features a red velvet bed that is too small for him, a gun on the bedside cabinet, the skeleton of a human arm in the kitchen, and books by Baudelaire. There is no television and nowhere to sit or eat. Here is a man who wants to be looked at but who does not wish to be visited.

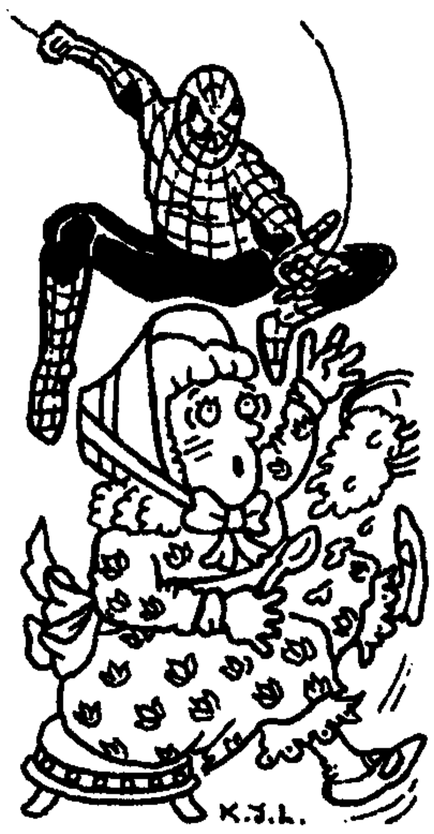
JESSICA BERENS on the artist Sebastian Horsley, *Observer Magazine*

...isn't this all – I hear you mutter – a little *de trop*? Well yes, absolutely, and not simply de trop in terms of what we expect from responsible creators, but *de trop* in terms of Horsley's own highly ductile psychopathology.

WILL SELF, also on the artist Sebastian Horsley, *Independent*

Stage three: Oullim (harmony)
Harmony is realized among the people of the world and in the true spirit of communication, large streamers drop from the top of the stadium. Audience members are asked to pass the cloth which will go above them and ultimately be woven together. The streamers will form a large sea, representing the global family communicating with one another, transcending nationality, race and religion.

FIFA's description of the third part of the World Cup opening ceremony



His aunt tells him he spends too much time in his bedroom and fears he might be gay. Stranded in his almost existential isolation, he desires intimacy with the people around him, but spurns contact for fear of imperilling their lives. The trails of sticky webbing that the film shows gushing from his wrists represent the pent-up longing and sorrow of the compulsive masturbator.

SUKHDEV SANDHU Reviewing Spider-Man, *The Daily Telegraph*

Metamorphoses
By Rosi Braidotti
Looks at the ethical, political and human implications of the postmodernist condition from a poststructuralist feminist agenda.

'This book warms my biophilic heart, as it informs my feminist soul and gives pleasure to my embodied mind.'

DONNA J. HARAWAY, University of California at Santa Cruz
Polity publishers catalogue

Pseuds Corporate

...Jade Aloof was awarded £150 third prize, having proposed being blindfolded for two weeks to understand what it is like to be blind in a world of highly visual brands.

Report on Coley Porter Bell's 'Blue Sky Awards', *Design Week*

Devise a series of creative labs...
...collaborating with priority areas and across media. Provide creative mentoring, produce concept development seminars, run rapid prototyping workshops.

BBC jobs ad, *Guardian*

CONTRIBUTORS: Don Salter, Gill Powell, Jonathan Gibbs, Danny Langley, Stephen Guest, Nick Newman, Phil Carter, Robert Murphy.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

HUCKERBY FINGERED

GRAHAM HUCKERBY was working for Securicor in July 1995 when masked gunmen attacked the van he was driving to the Midland Bank clearing centre in Salford. A witness who was parked in a lorry near the scene of the hi-jack saw him being frogmarched at gunpoint out of his van by one of the raiders and tied up to some railings.

The gang got away with at least £4m in cash and another £2m in cheques. Not a penny has ever been recovered. Now, after nearly seven years, two people have been convicted of the robbery. One of them is Graham Huckerby. The other is James Power, an alcoholic from Prestwich, who was convicted almost exclusively on the basis of phone calls he made, and the evidence of an undercover policeman called Barry Unknown. What was said in the calls no one knows. Judge Lakin sent both men to prison for 14 years.

Graham Huckerby and his girlfriend Luci Roper

Mr Huckerby's conviction has been greeted in the Prestwich area of Manchester where he lived with profound shock and disbelief. Friends and family know Mr Huckerby as a man of impeccable character who has no previous convictions. On 27 March, a fortnight after the conviction, Manchester QC Alan Conrad wrote: "In 25 years at the criminal Bar – the last three of them as Queen's Counsel – I have never encountered a case that has disturbed or worried me so much. I presently have grave misgivings about the safety of the convictions."

The case has a long history of aborted trials, acquittals of other defendants, and findings of insufficient evidence. At a trial in July last year, the jury found two defendants not guilty and could not agree on Huckerby or Power. A retrial of the two men was ordered, but was aborted after a juror was alleged to have spoken about the case to a member of the public. The case resumed with a new jury. The charge against Mr Huckerby was that he conspired with the armed robbers (none of whom have been identified) to make money for himself. The evidence for this was as follows:

- That he let the robbers into the van without activating the alarm. His explanation was that he was terrified by the raid, and feared for the life of his colleague who had left the van.

That at the time of the raid he made several phone calls to Mr Power. His answer was that for many years he often phoned Power to arrange to meet for a drink.

- That he paid £2,400 into his bank account in 1995 and 1996, and enjoyed thereafter a "jet set" lifestyle. Moreover, he had bought expensive gifts for his daughter. The evidence proved that £600 of the money had come from his mother, and another £1,500 was the repayment of a loan to a friend. The expensive gifts for his daughter amounted to a pair of Kickers shoes, some Lulu perfume and a couple of CDs. He had been on two foreign holidays since 1995 – to see his cousin in Los Angeles and another to Corfu. There was no evidence whatever of any change in his lifestyle after the robbery, and even less to suggest that he had had a share of the stolen millions.
- That he had seemed "restless and preoccupied" at Oldham Royal Hospital where he visited his daughter on the day before the robbery. The reason for this, he said, was concern for his daughter who was in severe pain from an illness that had not been diagnosed.
- That in May 1995 he had received £1,000 as a "sweetener" for the robbery two months later. This theory was weakened by the revelation that his parents had given him the money to buy a sofa and bed for a house to which he had just moved.
- He told his then girlfriend he had been "involved" in the robbery. So he had been, he reminded the jury. He was the victim of it. The girlfriend told the court that she never thought he had meant by the word "involved" that he had been in league with the robbers.

This is a fair summary of the prosecution case. No wonder Mr Conrad claimed in his advice after the trial: "In fact, we were able to deal with and defuse every point made by the crown."

Armed attacks on security vans carrying huge sums in cash are becoming more and more frequent. In an increasingly number of cases, including this one, the people responsible are getting away with their ill-gotten gains. They must be hugely encouraged by the highly dubious prosecution and conviction of Graham Huckerby and James Power. Mr Huckerby's girlfriend Luci Roper, who runs a training company, has circulated an enormous dossier on the case and demands his immediate release.

A ROD FOR BA'S BACK?

JOHN WARHAM, an airline pilot and past president of the Cathay Pacific pilots' union, was fascinated to read a long article in the *Sunday Times* earlier this year about Rod Eddington, chief executive of British Airways.

He remembered Eddington as chief executive of Cathay Pacific, an airline based in Hong Kong and owned mainly by the formidable Swire group. Mr Warham promptly wrote to the *Sunday Times*, suggesting its correspondent should have studied Eddington's treatment of staff at Cathay Pacific.

Mr Warham is a former chief negotiator for the pilots' union. His letter included the following facts and comments. "In 1993, Cathay management (under Eddington) undertook a complete review of the company's operations – an exercise in the finest traditions of the 1980s greed is good philosophy." Millions were spent on consultants, and a series of seminars arranged whose purpose was to set one group of employees against the other.

"The whole process at Cathay Pacific came under the corporate title of Operation Better Shape, a remarkably similar title to Eddington's 'Future Size and Shape" review at British Airways, some eight years on. Operation Better Shape was a concerted attack on Cathay Pacific employees and this attack has continued to the present day with the result that Cathay can now boast of having one of the longest-running industrial disputes with its pilots in the history of civil aviation.

Last July, concerned with the threat to flight safety posed by intimidation and coercion, Cathay Pacific pilots instituted a "maximum safety strategy" designed to protect the integrity of the operation. Management responded three days later by sacking 49 pilots "without giving any just cause…" If Eddington pursued similar tactics in Britain, Mr Warham points out, BA employees would enjoy some protection under employment legislation. "In Hong Kong, unfortunately, there is no such legislation." The last British governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, did enact some minor legislation to protect collective bargaining; but this was immediately repealed by the incoming administration which bows simultaneously to big business in Hong Kong and the "communist" government of China.

The 49 sacked pilots have sued Cathay Pacific in several countries, including Britain, and the cases, when they are heard, are likely to provide the public with some unpalatable facts about Cathay's role as employer and airline manager. Mr Warham's letter to the *Sunday Times* ended with a reminder that Ansett airlines of Australia, where Eddington took charge after leaving Cathay, is now bankrupt with debts of $1.8bn.

ROBSON GREED

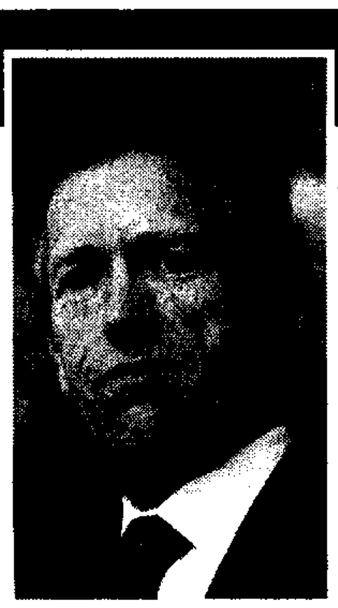
"ONE of the most respected civil servants of recent years" was how the *Financial Times* described Sir Steve Robson while puffing a pamphlet by him criticising the government for not "moving fast enough in the privatisation of public services.

The privatisation for which Sir Steve is most respected was the privatisation of the railways, which he masterminded from his senior position in the treasury. Hundreds of thousands of passengers, and employers and workers everywhere, have been respecting Sir Steve for his role in transforming of the old fuddy-duddy, hopelessly unpunctual and sometimes even dangerous British Rail into the sparkling, efficient and never dangerous new rail companies and Railtrack.

Sir Steve dreamed the whole thing up, and that is one of the reasons he is, again according to the *Financial Times*, "highly valued by Gordon Brown as well as a succession of Conservative chancellors".

Sir Steve of course is not a humble civil servant any longer. In April last year he joined the board of Cazenove, once a blue-blooded stockbroker, now an investment bank. In the years to April 2000 the bank made a fantastic profit of £79m on revenue of £310m. Much of this success can be attributed to privatisation, in which Cazenove is so often involved.

In case he doesn't get enough from Cazenove, Sir Steve can fall back on his directors' fees from the Royal Bank of Scotland, which describes itself as the "number one PFI bank in the UK". RBS is banker to Mapeley, the mysterious firm that bought all the tax and customs offices in Britain. RBS also financed the PFI hospital at Swindon that has cost the taxpayer a sudden and unexpected "top up" of more than £70m (see last *Eye*), the upgrade of London Underground's ticketing system, and the building of social security offices in Newcastle.



Sir Steve Robson

Sir Steve was an obvious choice as non-executive director of Partnerships UK (known as PUK, the privatised treasury taskforce on public private partnerships). PUK is supposed to protect the interests of public sector bodies in the increasing rush to privatisation – which is obviously why they've chosen Sir Steve as a director.

Other protectors of the public interest who sit with him on the PUK board are Judith Hanratty, company secretary of BP; and Gren Folwell, director of a number of companies in the Halifax (HBOS) Group. The group boasts that it is the second most prolific funder of UK privatisation projects. Thus it is that the protectors of the public interest include directors of the biggest and the second-biggest private organisations to benefit from public-private partnerships.

MMR UPDATE

CONFLICTING evidence and studies emerging on both sides of the Atlantic on the MMR/autism controversy in the past few days have left parents even more confused.

Last Wednesday Dr Arthur Krigsman, a paediatric gastroenterologist from the New York University School of Medicine, told a US congressional committee on autism that he had found an identical pattern of inflammatory bowel disease in 90 percent of his 43 young autistic patients, to that reported by Dr Andrew Wakefield four years ago when he first raised questions over MMR.

As the *Eye* reported in its special report *MMR: The Story So Far*, Krigsman's work is one of a handful of small clinical studies which give the lie to government claims that Wakefield's work has not been replicated. It is understood that Krigsman is now going to look for measles virus in his patients' guts.

The committee also heard that measles virus had been found in the spinal fluid of two autistic children. This means it would have direct access to the brain. Dr Jeff Bradstreet, medical director of the International Child Development Resource Centre, told the committee that spinal taps on his own autistic child and another had revealed measles virus; and that research work was now underway with other autistic children and normal control children to explore the significance of the discovery.

Dr Wakefield, the London gastroenterologist who first sounded alarm bells about the MMR vaccine, told the same hearing that preliminary studies had shown that 25 autistic children who had had a second dose of MMR, compared to those who had received only one, had suffered a worsening of their physical and behavioural symptoms, suggesting evidence of a link between their condition and the jab.

He said research by his group and collaborators and other small pockets of researchers in the US had now found that children with regressive autism had a novel form of inflammatory bowel disease not found in normal children and consistent with a viral cause; that the measles virus had been found in the diseased intestine where it would be expected if it were the cause; that the measles virus had been found in only a small minority of developmentally normal children; and, referring to the latest study from Prof John O'Leary's team from Trinity College, Dublin, that in 12 autistic children it had been identified as vaccine strain.

Meanwhile in the UK, a study billed as "the most in-depth analysis of the scientific literature to date" published in *Clinical Evidence* concluded that "there is no evidence that MMR or single measles vaccines are associated with autism or inflammatory bowel disease". The work was yet another review of the same body of work which others have trawled over before and it would be surprising if it had come up with any other conclusion. The trouble is, as a similar review carried out by the American Institute of Medicine (IOM) acknowledged, "the epidemiological evidence lacks the precision to assess rare occurrences of a response to MMR leading to autism". The IOM called for more research comparing MMR-vaccinated children with non-vaccinated children and investigating whether vaccine strain measles was present in autistic children.

The UK review not only had no new research work, but it excluded the whole body of research that Wakefield was referring to – about 20 papers in total – including that which revealed the vaccine strain virus. Independent researchers from Bazian, a company promoting evidence-based health care, who carried out the review, said they followed strict research criteria and ruled out all small clinical studies which were open to bias. But it is the small clinical studies, which are actually looking at what is happening to these children, that are causing alarm.

One such study is that of Prof O'Leary. Though he himself declared last week that he still advocated immunisation and his new work showing the presence of vaccine strain measles virus in the guts of autistic children does not *prove* any link between MMR and autism, his work does raise serious questions.

What is the virus is doing in the guts of these children? Is it causing the damage or is it there because autism and bowel disease mean the children can't clear it from their systems? Could it be elsewhere in their bodies?

News from the US that the virus has also been found in spinal fluid – albeit only in two children – has alarmed parents even more. Julie Loch, a pharmacist whose son Oliver is severely autistic, said: "Many like my son are awaiting MRI scans due to further increasing and alarming neurological problems. The measles virus has now been found in cerebro spinal fluid in others, suggesting its presence in the brain. Are our children sitting time bombs, that will at some point develop the fatal brain condition SSPE?"

Instead of relying on reviews of old research and studies, the case for new research to answer these questions one way or another is overwhelming. Why won't the government embark on it?

HEIR OF SOROS

EVERY year Inland Revenue chiefs hold an "open day" at which they invite staff to ring them with any queries about the service. This year, chairman Nick Montague (whose many achievements in the past include his central role in rail privatisation) was irritated by the number of calls from tax inspectors and officials who are regular readers of the *Eye*.

They asked Montague and his assistants how they justified the sale of all the tax offices in Britain to a collection of the world's leading tax avoiders whose company, Mapeley, is registered in the British Virgin Islands. Montague replied that all this was above board, though he and his assistants differed as to the accuracy of the amount received by the Revenue and Customs for their buildings. Montague thought the billion pounds mentioned in the *Eye* was an overestimate, while at least one assistant thought it an underestimate.

Another cheeky fellow on line to Montague read out a list of the main "investors" in Mapeley – George Soros, the international currency speculator and friend of former chancellor Norman Lamont; Halifax, one of the country's biggest tax avoiders; EDS, the main IT contractors used by the British government; Aqumen; Maclellan International; Coflex. Were these not the companies tax inspectors are constantly grappling with? Was it really appropriate that the same tax avoiders should have such a vast stake in the running of the Inland Revenue buildings, and avoiding tax for their millionaires in the process?

No problem, replied the exasperated Montague. There must, he suggested, be "sound commercial reasons" for what the company is doing. So there are of course. There are always sound commercial reasons for paying less tax. "You've been reading *Private Eye*!" one Montague assistant concluded crossly. "When are you going to grow up?"

Meanwhile, further evidence emerges of the appointment and promotion of tax avoidance specialists to important posts in the tax authorities. On 10 June, a new "head of tax" was appointed by Customs and Excise, which collects VAT. He is Chris Tailby, who since 1990 has been a "VAT partner" at the big accountants PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC). PWC ask businesses "are you paying too much VAT?" and boasts: "our group of VAT specialists is unique in its exclusive dedication to providing comprehensive solutions aimed at optimising the VAT position of out clients".

PWC has also lobbied MPs on this issue. In a memorandum in 1999, it claimed Customs "devote far too many resources chasing relatively small amounts of potential revenue". The attitude of Customs officers to perceived avoidance is, claimed PWC, "emotive rather than balanced". Now that poacher Chris Tailby has the gamekeeper's job, these complaints will no doubt be speedily dealt with.

GRAND OLD DUKE PAYS UP

ALMOST exactly two years ago, the *Eye* published news of an embarrassing dispute on the Goodwood estate on the Sussex Downs run by His Grace the Duke of Richmond and his son the Earl of March (pictured right).

The thrust of the revelations was that the estate had for seven years been ripping off the taxpayer by pretending that land was "environmentally sensitive" when a lot of it had been devoted to the Festival of Speed, a not very environmentally sensitive commercial jamboree for more than 100,000 people involving all sorts of noisy vehicles, including tanks.

The ministry of agriculture (MAFF), which ran the "environmentally sensitive area" scheme, told the *Eye* at the time that in the 12 years since the scheme started under the Thatcher government, no less than £230m had been shelled out to (mainly wealthy) landowners like the Duke of Richmond.

But what about the money spent at Goodwood where the owners' dedication to environmental sensitivity was so questionable? A MAFF spokesman in Reading responded to calls from local papers asking about the *Eye* revelations by assuring them that MAFF was investigating and "a statement" would be made in due course. There was, however, no statement.

Last year the Festival of Speed was moved away from the environmentally sensitive area, but the *Eye* was surprised to discover that the festival is on again this year, for three days starting on 12 July, in the same area and with the same format as before. So we asked the ministry, now called DEFRA, what had happened. A spokeswoman came up with a most interesting reply.

"Ministry officials," she said, "have had months of discussion with the farmer [a rather quaint reference to the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of March and their agents]. As a result of those discussions, they [the estate] have agreed to pay back all the money they got from the government over numerous years."

Naturally, the *Eye* asked how much. But that was going too far. This information, the spokeswoman explained, was "confidential" since it had been settled by confidential agreement between ministry and landowner. No one, she said, had been publicly criticised, let alone prosecuted. Asked if the government's position was that taxpayers' money had been wrongly paid out to some of the richest men in England but taxpayers had no right to know how much, she insisted: "that is the information I have and that is all I can tell you".

At any rate, the good news is that the Festival of Speed land will no longer be regarded as environmentally sensitive, and no more taxpayers' money will be shelled out for it.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

SO THE phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed tells the *Financial Times* that he is funding Harrods, the Paris Ritz and Fulham from his "international businesses, financial interests, oil and mining businesses".

Just what these may be he left undescribed. Not surprising as there is little evidence of such businesses and where there is, as in oil and gold, there is no evidence of success. Indeed Fayed is said to be desperate to sell his oil interests in Thailand which have absorbed up to $100m for little return. The Harrods Holdings accounts to January 2001 show there was little material trading with Harrods Natural Resources, Harrods Energy or Harrods Minerals Mongolia.

"I have no problems with cash," Fayed told the *FT*. How true for a man who walks round with thousands in his briefcase. But not really the explanation why Harrods paid a near £60m dividend it did not earn to Momo and his brothers. But then the pharaoh's grip on matters financial is never strong. He described the dividend as being "money we don't need" which he then returns to the company, ie himself.

Meanwhile the Fayed cash flow faces another test with his current high court action for wrongful arrest against the Metropolitan police. Having abandoned any claim for damage to reputation (on the grounds he has none) Fayed is now taking the unique line of declining to testify over his arrest on the Rowland safe deposit burglary and claiming that the arrest was wrongful not because he didn't do it but because the police could not prove it at the time he was arrested even though he later settled with the Rowland estate by effectively admitting the burglary and paying over £1.5m plus as much in costs. There is speculation that having lost an appeal to have a jury trial Fayed was advised to settle but chose instead another multi-million risk.

SERIOUS Farce Office director Ros Wright argues that removing juries from fraud trials will allow the SFO to present more of a defendant's criminality in court. Not while the SFO cuts deals like that it struck after an almost four year investigation into John Thoroughgood *(sic)* of Modern Integrated Systems.

The former contracts manager was jailed for 18 months last week after pleading guilty to obtaining £400,000 by inflating or inventing invoices for security equipment supplied to British Nuclear Fuels. The City Police investigation identified that Thoroughgood had scammed £2m from MIS on contracts for BNFL, Guy's Hospital and others. He initially faced charges covering this full amount including a possible further 200 false invoices. However, this was bargained down to one count in return for the guilty plea meaning an effective nine months in prison for a five-year fraud. Even allowing for the up to 50 percent discount available for guilty pleas not a great bargain for the SFO given the cost of the investigation. Especially as Thoroughgood's partners escaped entirely. Seems the Levitt lesson has still to be learned. Punishments have to fit the crime not just the win column.

WHY did Tyco International director and major shareholder Lord Ashcroft sell his Florida home to his wife for $100 when it was worth at least the $2.5m paid by a Tyco executive using Tyco money later the same day in 1997 soon after he had sold ADT to Tyco?

Some suggest to avoid tax. Some that a sale by a director's wife might not need to be disclosed in detail if at all, according to the wrong advice now indicted chairman Dennis Kozlowski suggested. All agree such sleight of sale would not have aroused too many concerns about transparency with the man who owns Belize.

"Why not pay your Danegeld in easy monthly instalments with a direct debit or regular standing order?"

WITH Andersen down, the US justice department and the Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC) can now concentrate their investigative firepower on its client Enron.

Both are expected to focus their respective criminal and civil attentions on some of the many accountancy tricks – or techniques, in beancounter speak – used, abused and always agreed whereby the energy trader first boosted its earnings and then hid or diminished its losses and liabilities.

Not all were criminal but many tested if not burst the edges of the audit envelope as Enron, and similar companies with which it increasingly did business, looked to inflate earnings and feed the expectations of analysts and investors as the great 90s stock market boom made its final frenetic surge.

That wish to accelerate earnings certainly seems to have been a large part of the motivation behind the massive gas-for-power deals done between Enron and its Dallas rival, TXU, which is a major hope for recovery by creditors of Enron Europe. Administrators PwC this month issued legal proceedings against TXU over two long-term energy deals worth potentially up to £1.5bn.

TXU, for whom the deals had become hugely loss-making because of the collapse in UK energy prices in the past two years, endeavoured to use Enron's administration to terminate the contracts as provided under the agreement. No doubt seeing this coming, Enron declared TXU in breach of the contracts hours before the company went into administration. As Enron would have been considering administration for days if not weeks, this was clearly calculated to get its contractual retribution in first and beat the expected TXU counter-punch by stopping the legal clock.

The origins of the deals go back to late 1996 before the former Hanson-owned Eastern Electricity was acquired by TXU. Enron, which had no UK retail customers, was building the Sutton Bridge power plant. Eastern, which had 3m domestic and commercial customers (TXU now has 5m), was looking to avoid the cost of a new plant to supply them.

So Enron sold Eastern first one then a second virtual power station (VPS). Eastern agreed to supply gas to Enron in return for power from Sutton Bridge and a planned Isle of Grain plant.

This saved Eastern perhaps as much as £700m in capital expenditure. It gave Enron Europe a guaranteed cash flow from 1999 to 2014 in the case of VPS1 and 2018 in the case of VPS2. Enron being Enron, it booked the profits on both deals up front between 1996 and 1997 when both were signed and 1999 when they came on stream using its controversial mark-to-market accounting techniques, even though the contracts extended well beyond forecastable limits.

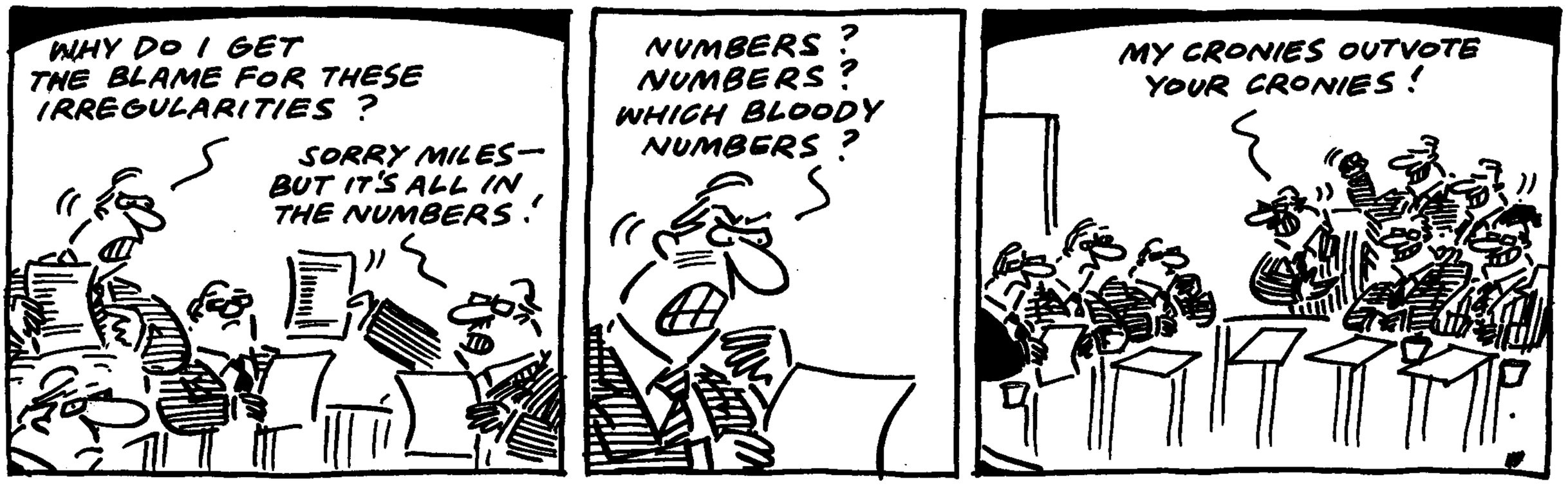
But Eastern/TXU also wanted a little help with its figures from its new best friends at Enron. The first VPS deal signed in December 1996 was the subject of a number of amendments or "tilts" through 1997 and 1998 as Eastern, renamed Energy Group, was juggling takeover bids. These were from PacifiCorp and then TXU, the latter finally winning in April 1998 with an offer of almost £4.5bn. The second VPS deal was signed in October 1997 and amended three months later and again in December 1998.

During this period Energy was eager to make its figures look better to obtain a higher price. So too subsequently was TXU to justify a very high and what now seems over generous bid to buy into the UK market. Like other American bidders in this period – such as Enron with Wessex Water – TXU failed to realise just how regulated the UK utility markets are, limiting the opportunity to gouge customers with price hikes. Which is why most of the US bidders have since sold and left.

All the amendments to the VPS contracts were structured to benefit Eastern/TXU more than Enron – at least initially. Internal Enron documents suggest that the first "tilt" in the VPS1 contract in September 1997 saw Eastern gain by boosting earnings by maybe £6m through discounting the long-term cash flow at a too generous level. A second "tilt" in March 1998 saw Enron pay Eastern £15m. Usually it is the buyer who pays a fee, not the seller; but then Eastern needed an immediate earnings fix with the bid battle raging. In October that year Enron paid TXU at least £40m and possibly much more in a third "tilt" to the contract. A payment of £20m may also have been made to TXU on the VPS2 contract in 1997

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG

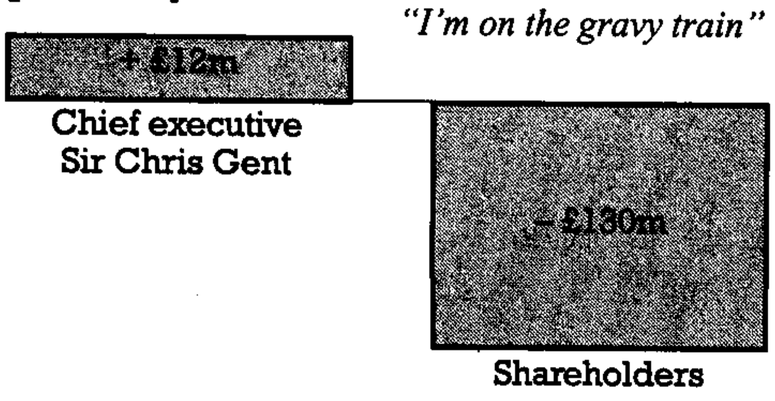

WHY DO I GET THE BLAME FOR THESE IRREGULARITIES ?
SORRY MILES— BUT IT'S ALL IN THE NUMBERS !
NUMBERS ? NUMBERS ? WHICH BLOODY NUMBERS ?
MY CRONIES OUTVOTE YOUR CRONIES !

Stock Horror

Not a Gent

Profit and loss at **Vodafone** over the past two years

"I'm on the gravy train"



or 1998 when it was amended.

These deals could be characterised as effective loans because they reduced Eastern/TXU's borrowings and improved earnings thereby enhancing all important shareholder value. TXU was effectively borrowing from Enron without creating a loan in its balance sheet generating an immediate benefit in return for paying more much later. Enron in turn could each time book profits on the contract accounting now for the higher charges and greater capacity many years later.

This seems another example of how Enron Europe led the way in offering earnings management schemes to other aggressive accounting companies. Enron would offer effective loans or discounts now in return for increased payments/interest later. In the US Enron did much bigger structured finance schemes involving fibre optic network capacity swaps with telecom groups Global Crossing and Qwest to accelerate earnings. Both Global and Qwest have since all but collapsed and are now under investigation by the US authorities.

Eastern/TXU was in effect getting an immediate cash back from the Enron supermarket. Enron was getting an improvement in the contract terms much further down the road by increases in daily charges and capacity.

Internal Enron documents show that by the beginning of 2000 TXU was well out of the money on both contracts, which were valued by Enron Europe at £400m. TXU represented 90 percent of Enron Europe's net exposure to counter parties in energy deals at £354m and had guarantees from TXU totalling £545m. These guarantees were becoming more important as power prices fell. In addition Enron soon had no power stations with which to hedge its supply contracts. Sutton Bridge was sold and Isle of Grain was never built. But as long as prices fell Enron was still very much in the money.

Just how much is further demonstrated by TXU's own figures. By end 2000 TXU Europe was out of the money to the tune of £589m on electricity contracts compared with being in the money by £76m a year before. This was primarily blamed on the collapse in UK power prices, confirming the significance of the Enron contracts. TXU Europe had commitments under long-term contracts totalling £2.7bn mostly with Enron and one other supplier. Now these positions would have further worsened during 2001, so no wonder TXU jumped at the chance presented by Enron's collapse to escape from the contracts.

Just how much of Enron Europe's share – maybe £500m to £1.5bn – of that £2.7bn the administrators will be able to recover remains to be seen. TXU has written off a mere £14m as its exposure to Enron. PwC is unlikely to settle for so little. But it could take several years and lots of fees before the matter is resolved. Meanwhile TXU might be thinking that it paid a high price for the limited one-off earnings boost with which Enron tempted a succession of Eastern Electricity owners.

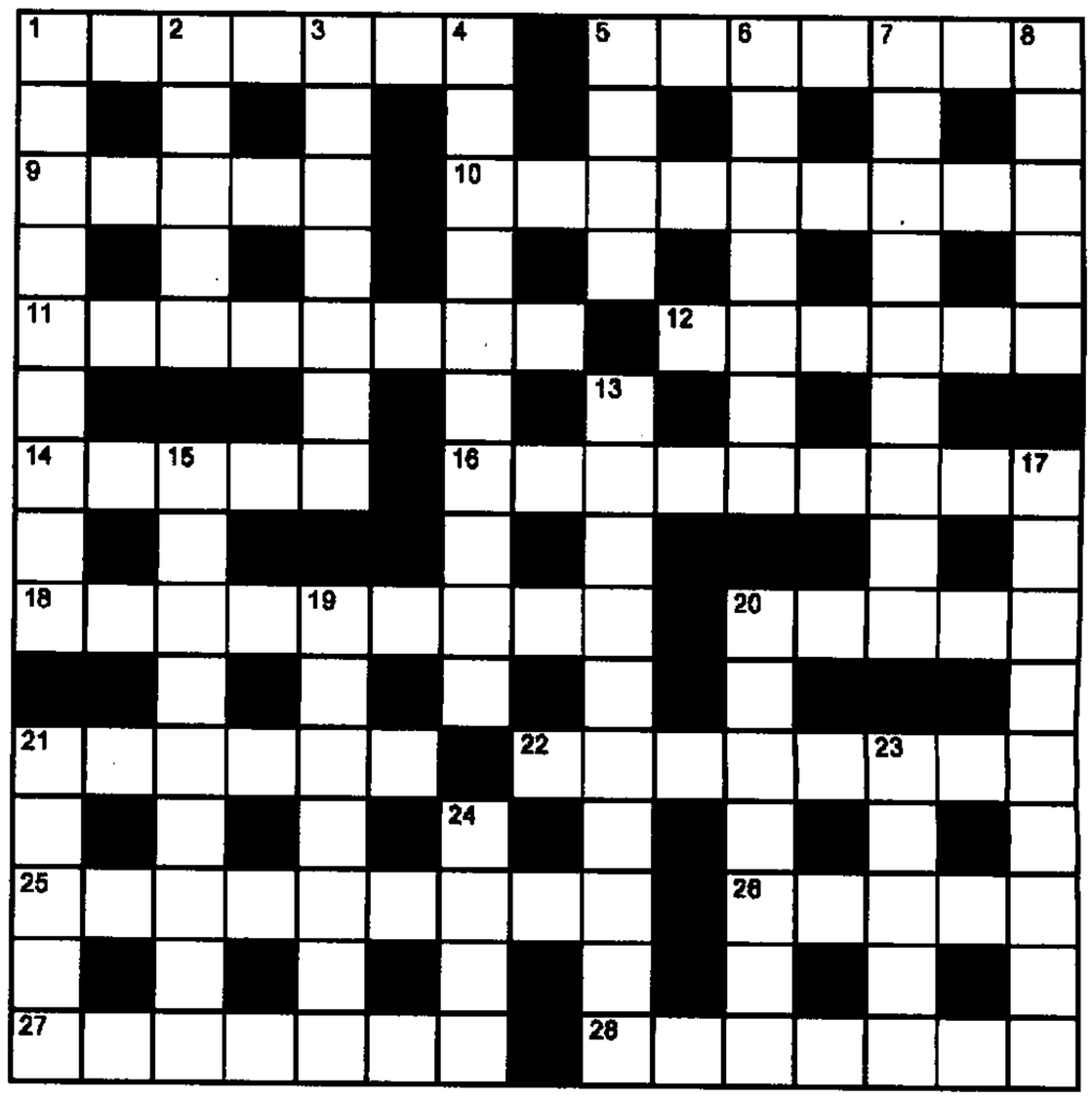
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 212

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 5 July 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 I can't be bothered with calling head (4,3)
5 Shag sheep on date, glistening with sweat (7)
9 Native American takes penis's first inch (5)
10 Worried type, Brad wants nipper (4-5)
11/16 Some old ditherer dressed as Dan Dare makes a sarcastically welcome comparison (1,4,2,1,9)
12 The philosopher, John Thomas not caught with joint (6)
14 Hack with tabloid turned dramatist (5)
16 See 11
18 Runs out of articles — leaves (3,6)
20 Cross-maker now dissatisfied with Blair? (5)
21 One full of hackneyed opinions? (6)
22 Brown, pissed, puked and pissed (6,2)
25 Portable support for arse, base of member and shaft (4-5)
26 New woman joins right? I don't believe it! (5)
27 Climaxes, points and rings the bell (7)
28 Goer composed song (4,3)

DOWN

1 City tits taking *Daily Express* leader to heart (9)
2 Head removed from piss-artist ace for Salome, possibly (5)
3 God, Jack's got high on sex with Brenda! (7)
4 Could easily make you go down, the fruity thing (6,4)
5 On-screen activity is bloody cheek (4)
6 Balls-up of continental cable broadcast (7)
7 Humour coarse, stupid person embracing royal campaign of persecution (5-4)
8 Perhaps Tom coupled with himself, going round bend — that's cereal produce for you (5)
13 "Stuff the French!" *Sun*'s chief journalist entered disorderly (10)
15 Dreary Brenda: pointless, twisted and wrinkly (9)
17 Peak division within two years for this far from popular political bunch? (4,5)
19 Flush shown by Queen on getting wrong sort of IUD inserted (5,2)
20 Crafty arrivals to Britain, Greek family first in limited visibility (7)
21 Class given by Chuck: "Getting head from escorts" (5)
23 Nick died with vital erection (5)
24 Drink up second drink (4)

Crossword 211 winner: TOM COLLINS

Solution to Crossword 211

ACROSS: 1 Penitents 6 Truer 9 Aesop 10 Real McCoy 11 Fart-arses around 12 Lesbian 15 Oilily 17 Arming 19 Signs up 22 Siphon the python 25 Grim death 26 Ennui 27 Sugar 28 Stressing.

DOWN: 1 Pratfall 2 Noser 3 Topkapi 4 Narks 5 Snapshots 6 Tumbril 7 Uncouples 8 Riyadh 13 Strapping 14 Nightjars 16 Spanking 18 In order 20 Gayness 21 V-signs 23 Esher 24 Hanoi.

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France

Echeverria
Cabernet Sauvignon 2000,
Chile

Chianti Castiglioni,
Frescobaldi 2000,
Italy

Chateau Beranger,
Bordeaux 2000,
France

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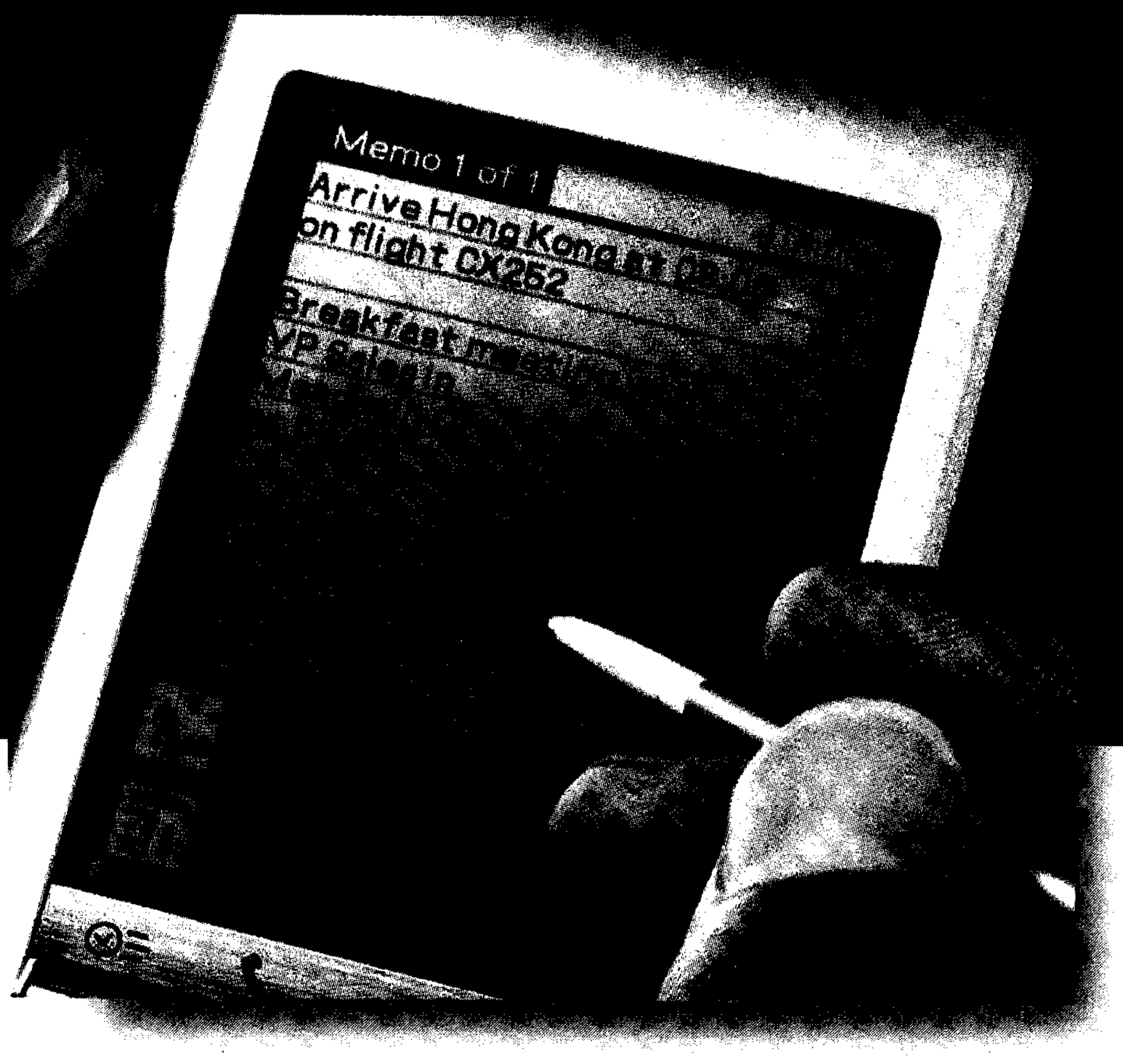

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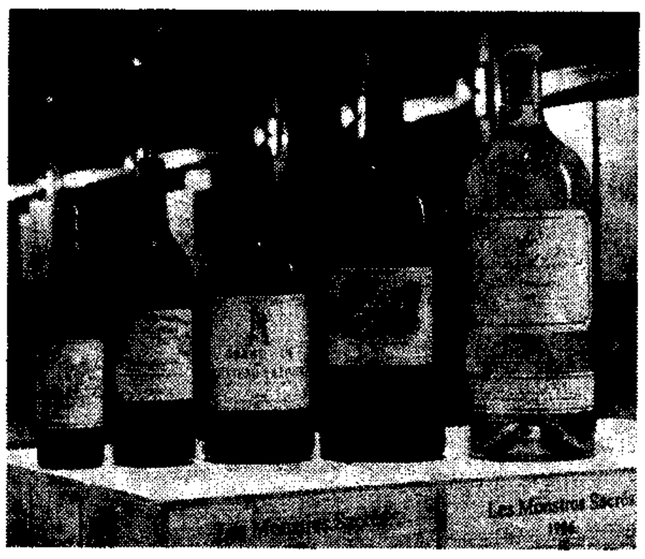

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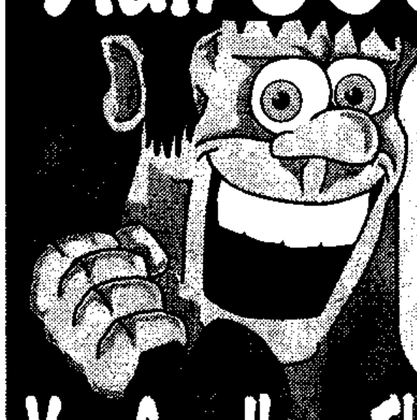

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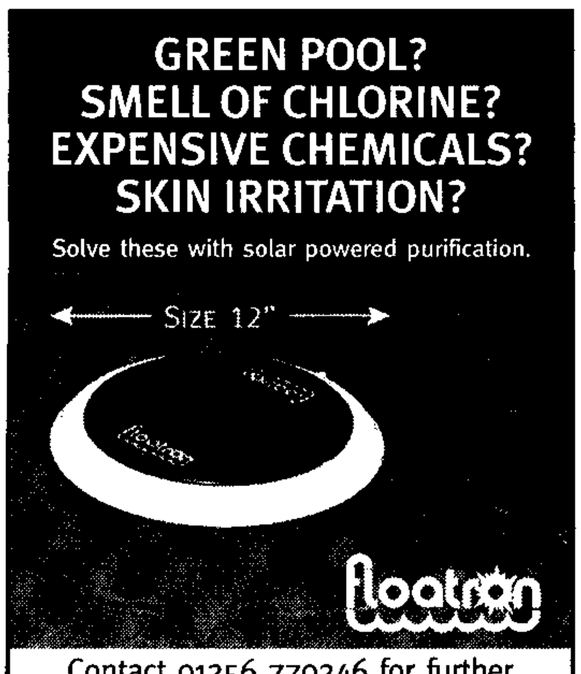

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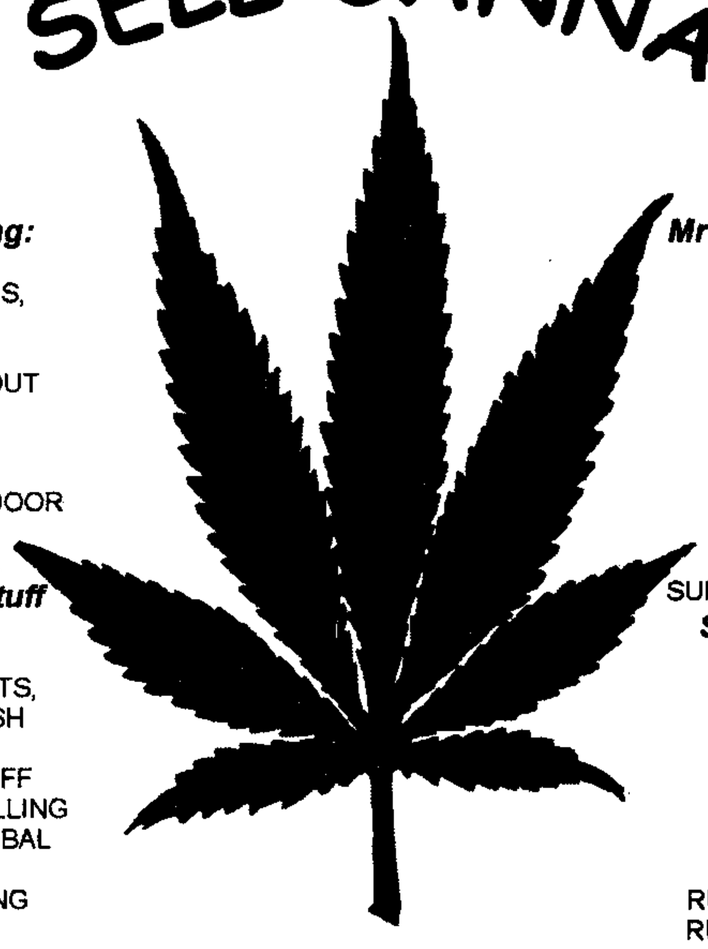

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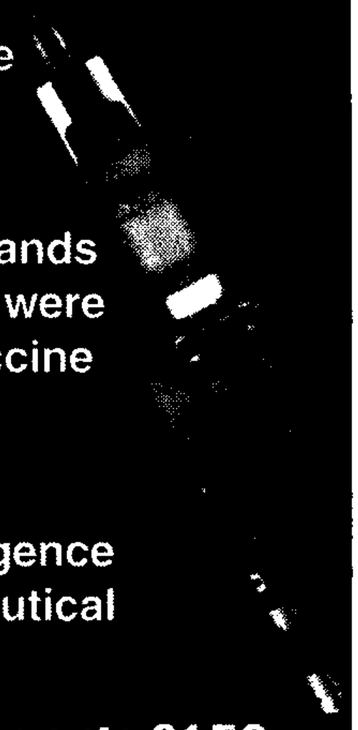

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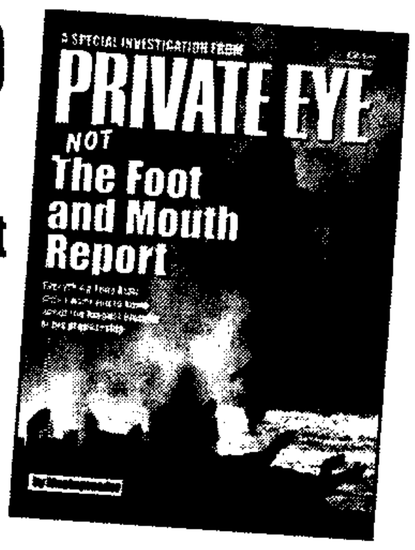

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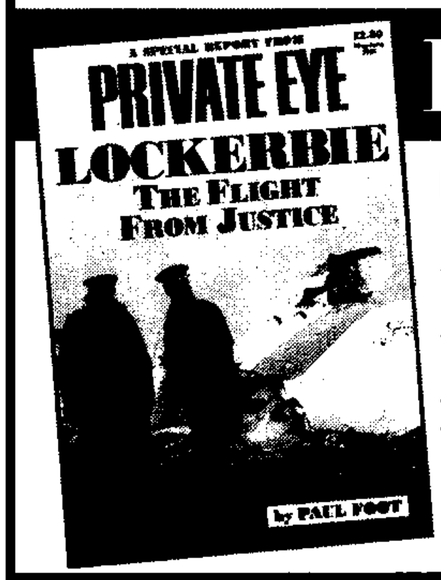

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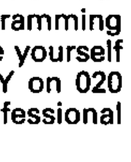

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DEEPLY DEPRESSED MALE PHD graduate with mounting debts. £20k to clear. Thank you. Clydesdale Bank 82-70-12 30113577.

FRIEND OF BILL W 8 YEARS, one day at a time thanks to AA. Recently completed LLB honours law degree at present badly in debt, need funding for my law practice course. Any help greatly appreciated. Sincere thanks for Therese of Lisieux. Box 1657.

NEED £3000 FOR EDINBURGH festival great show atomick@bigfoot.com for details Lloyds 30-95-42, 03043346.

DESPERATE SINGLE MUM of three needs £6000 to escape violent drug addict for fresh start. Genuine. Thanks. Account number 92628001. Sort code 60-06-06.

ADVENTUROUS DYNAMIC 65 year old women aims to crash into old age happy and fulfilled, meanwhile I want to travel, finish off a philosophy degree and – who knows? Sadly I need money to realise my ambition. Can you help? FIRST DIRECT sort code 40-47-75, account 883890186 or Box 1257.

PLEASE HELP SINGLE MUM send brilliant son to University. Sort 72-50-06, 37554388.

STUNNINGLY POOR ARTIST seeks genuine money to complete happiness £15 – expensive education £7000, and next exhibition. Any amounts welcome, include e-mail / postal address for invitation to preview – HSBC 40 12 01, Account 01309498. Many thanks. Box 1557.

26 YEAR OLD STROKE SURVIVOR requires funding to pursue teaching career. Midland 40-27-01 21138375.

DISINHERITED DAUGHTER urgently needs £30,000 to clear debts. Thanks. Abbey National 09-01-26, 70331126.

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN needs help to replace valuable stolen instruments. All donations very gratefully received. HSBC 40-17-53 a/c 31206583.

FORCED RETRIAL £2,500 will provide a service and help restore damaged self esteem. BoS 80-07-74 Account 00927087. Thank you.

THERE WAS A YOUNG MAN WITH A PLAN / Who said "You know, just I am, I could make millions more. Than I have (now being poor) If I only had cash for that plan." Bank of Scotland 160042, 00202940.

5 YRS ON, Screenwriter of "RELATIVE VALUES" (Julia Andrews, Colin Firth etc.) still waiting to be paid. Situation desperate. Please help. Will pay back once 2nd film - "THE RIVALS" (now in development) starts shooting. HSBC 40-02-13, 01136550.

FINANCIAL HELP. Back injury from car accident. Wiped out by the Sultan of Brunei's son. He claimed diplomatic immunity. I need treatment. Lloyds/TSB 30-94-08, 02469901.

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HELP! £15,000 NEEDED to pay legal fees for abuse claim against local authority. Legal aid withdrawn. Thank you. Lloyds/T.S.B. 30-65-92, 10030568.

£4000 REQUIRED FOR COMPUTER, suits, to gain employment. Thanks. Alliance Leicester 00000000 - 72-58-10-01023023304.

PLEASE HELP. Last chance to pay for sick child. H.S.B.C. 40-43-01, 31148745. Thank you.

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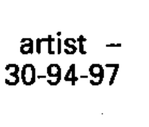

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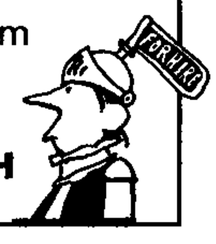

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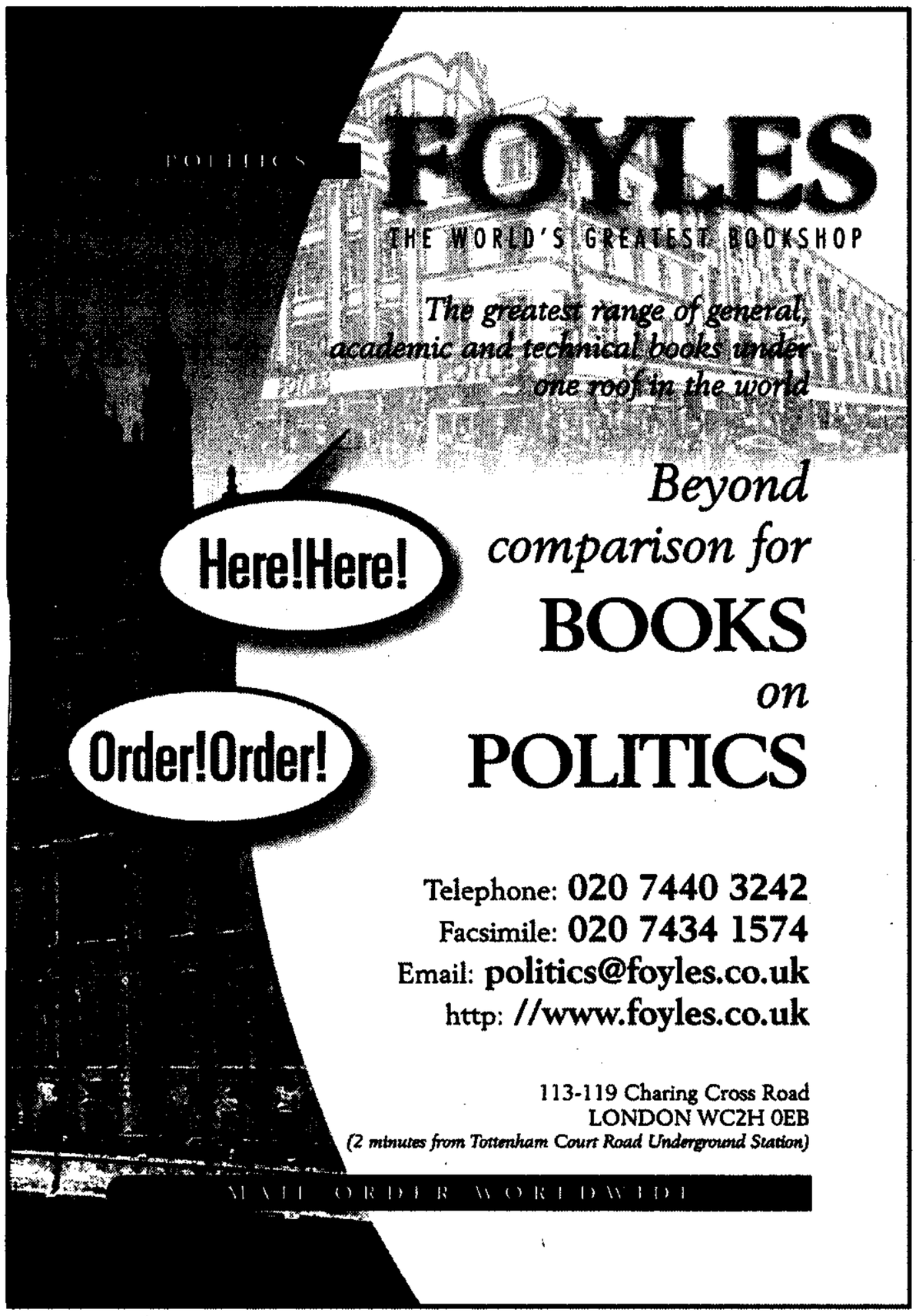
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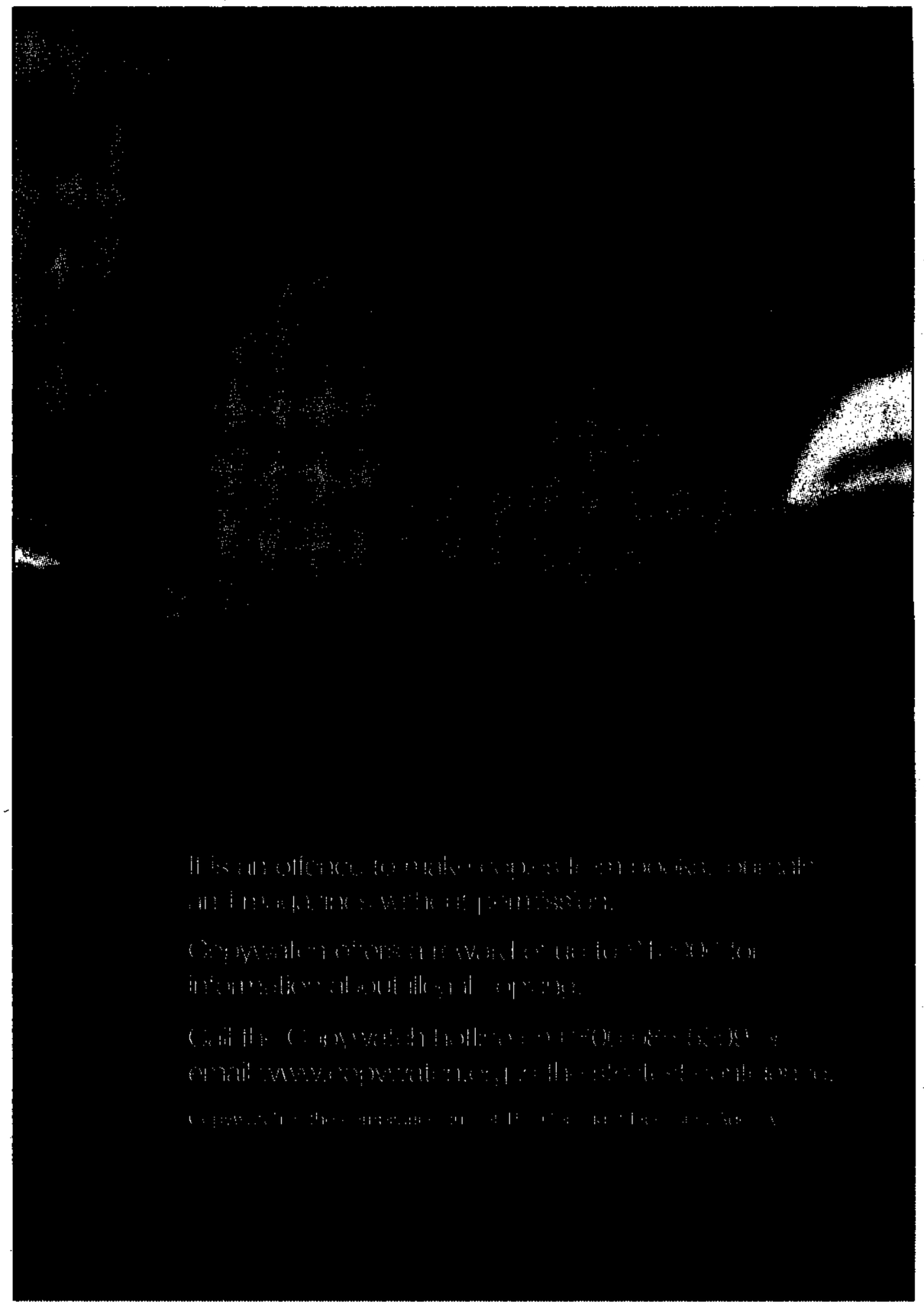

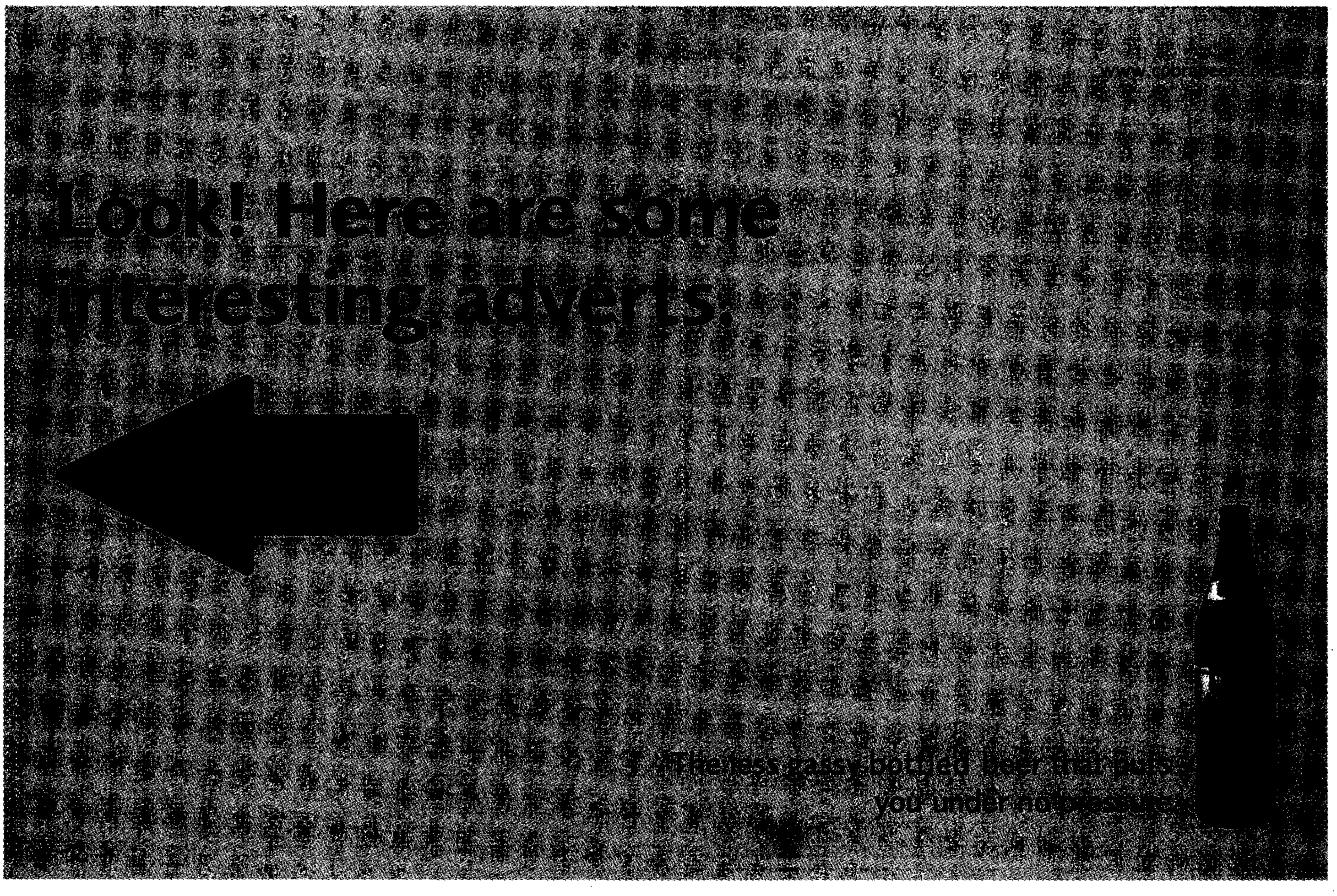
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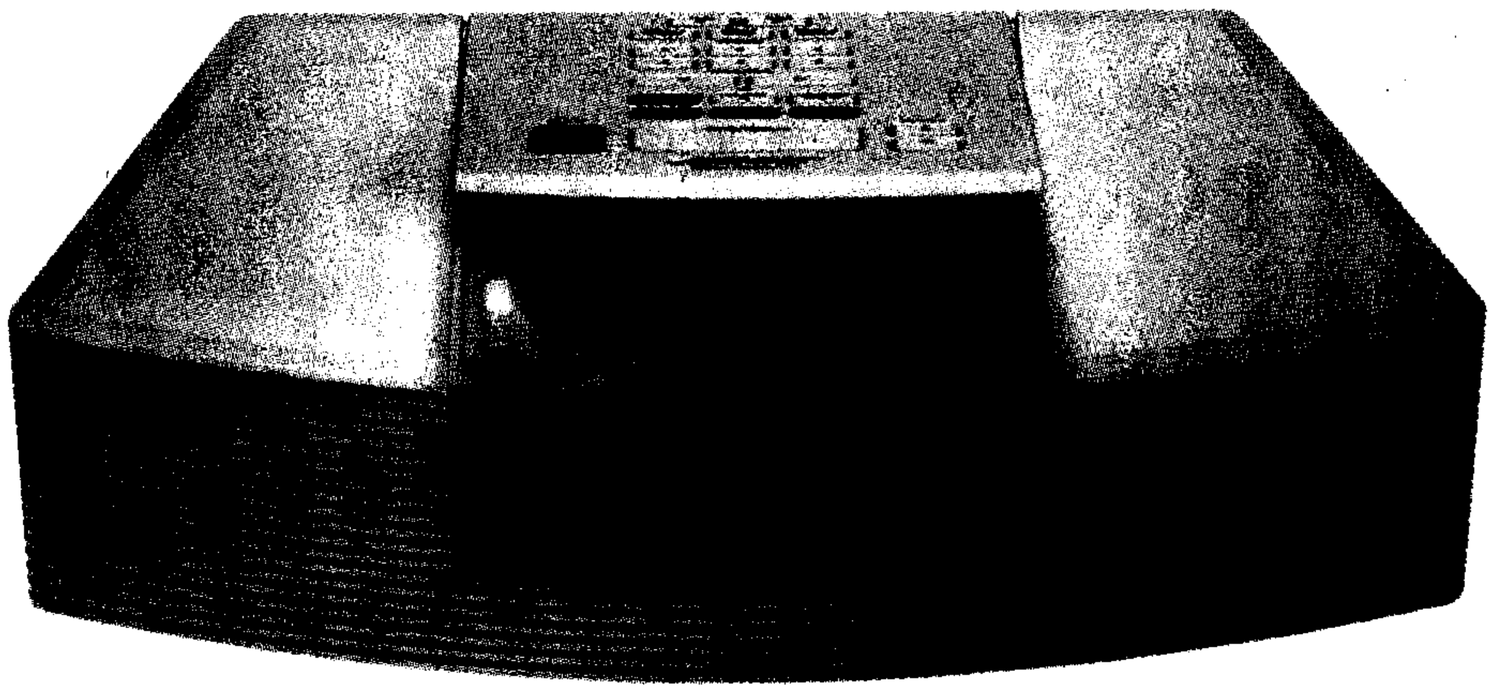

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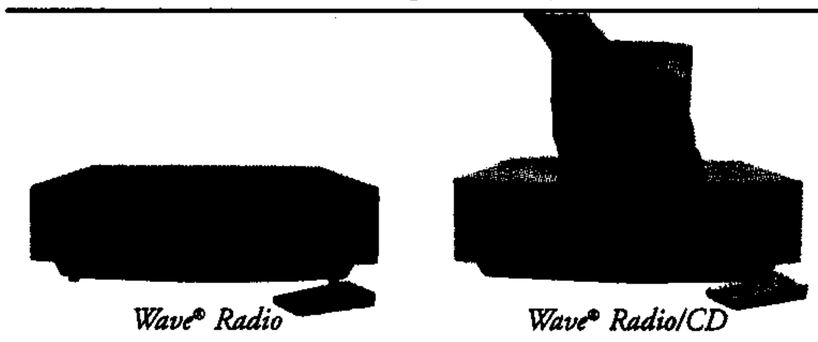

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